1 January 2025

What Tatol is saying at -15:00 to go (w/ Herrigel) might be worth including as pretext to my question (that I propose to send to Herrigel or Alzate if I can find a receptacle) of whether I've got his press release (which he'd just mentioned—ca. -18:00) right and what he thinks a "raft" (or good art) can look like, or what he's so far gathered the ability to say about good art (whether something about what it is, something about how it's made, or something else)

-15:00 to go, Tatol: [By contrast to Hüsker Dü, who had available the Hardcore world that they could take as their field of play and do something interesting therewith,] "The difficulty now is the indeterminacy of the condition that we're in, the sense that you're being swallowed by all the stuff that you don't want to associate with. There's no counterculture, there's no clear mode to take part in as a sort of life raft to orient yourself. What you're saying is something that I think is pretty true, which is that you have to orient yourself to express that aimlessness, or that lack of positionality."

Just earlier, -19:40 to go, Herrigel, having just come to state that "whimsy vs. cleverness" is equivalent to "earnestness vs. irony": "That Eyrie press release was about this: How do you present something that feels pertinent to you that can just cut through that shit a little bit? What I'm interested in is the things that I can't really flatten out into one or the other."

3 January 2025

Maybe for co-opting something like Bandcamp as a platform to display things I make, maybe even things with Dad's Yeti microphone and so forth alongside all kind of other things like the thing linked at the start of the note 5 January 2025.

Ludovic Nemo
Spa Town (name of an item?)
ludic8888prism

5 January 2025

[I cut a bit and put it in another file]

When I read that “Elie Faure said of Watteau: ‘He imbued with the utmost transitoriness those things which our gaze encounters as the most enduring, namely space and forests,’” I thought of Canterbury Ct in place of Watteau’s space and forests, and I wondered how to put names to all that in Canterbury Ct would correspond to the poles of the Watteau operation (utmost transitoriness on the one hand and the consummately enduring abstract space and forest on the other).

How to put names to that place’s geometries, half-steps and pairs of half-steps down to lower planes, and always angles slightly more oblique than right, these corners compounding each other so that things far were either left of left or right of right of right or any other combination thereof or, analogously, behind not one but two screens of extensive solid glass and the filter-layers of cool cypress shade-dappling between them.

How to remember the unfathomable grain of that place’s surfaces, Spanish tile pale orange-red and lain with thick gritty grout, walls set with large stones feeling Texan in one way or another whether by a cool white lime route or a bigger less regular sandy brown one, smells indescribable but forever instantaneously recallable, deep baroque oceanic textures in green (whether jade or tile or anything materially dazzling like gold, frankincense, myrrh), large beams of solid wood stained unto black around windows and along edges of planes, light fixtures reminding one of museums though at a certain dated remove (generating more heat, for example), beds of monkey grass and jasmine defining outdoor zones just as alluring as the green-glowing plush-smooth stretches of golf course though opposite those spaces in that the golf grass invites the barefoot running of children at uncommon top registers of pace.

These and all its other mists conform to no familiar grammar for specifying a place.

[* This comes from the following section, which is perhaps not relevant at all; it is toward a characterization of the distinction between repetition and equivalence, in which Law is on the side of equivalence because it requires always that subjects fit into the variables of general formulae and therefore that they be interexchangeable, etc. I only paste because it is evocative and good and generally of the stuff of which I’m always ambiently in search, that stuff which propelled me one year ago to single out Difference and Repetition as the height-site of what I was looking for and found myself only partially satisfied in Anti-Oediupus: “Law unites the change of the water and the permanence of the river. Elie Faure said of Watteau: 'He imbued with the utmost transitoriness those things which our gaze encounters as the most enduring, namely space and forests.' This is the eighteenth-century method. Wolmar, in La Nouvelle Héloïse, made a system of it: the impossibility of repetition, and change as a general condition to which all particular creatures are subject by the law of Nature, were understood in relation to fixed terms (themselves, no doubt, variables in relation to other permanences and in function of other, more general laws). This is the meaning of the grove, the grotto and the 'sacred' object. Saint-Preux learns that he cannot repeat, not only because of his own change and that of Julie, but also because of the great natural permanences, which assume a symbolic value and exclude him no less from true repetition.”]

For all that Watteau puts me in mind to turn away, there is in the liquid texture of certain green here and there something with links both to the mists above and to those with which the Balthus book L’Imprenable : Balthus : Le paysage flooded my mind on the plane back to Dallas from Geneva.

And since even in naming what I've already blurringly named I've done violence, why not rip croppings of unaccountable rectangles from the most crassly available digital images (those taken upon the house's staging in 2014 and still on the internet).

"half-steps and pairs of half-steps down to lower planes"

"always angles slightly more oblique than right, these corners each compounding the others so that things far were either left of left or right of right of right or any other combination therefrom"

"not one but two screens"

“extensive solid glass”

“filter-layers of cool cypress”

“shade-dappling”

“Spanish tile pale orange-red and lain with thick gritty grout”

“cool white lime”

“bigger and less regular sandy brown”

“deep baroque oceanic textures in green (whether jade or tile or anything materially dazzling like gold, frankincense, myrrh)”

“large beams of solid wood stained unto black”

“light fixtures reminding one of museums though at a certain dated remove (generating more heat, for example)”

“beds of monkey grass and jasmine defining zones outside”

That is how memory looks when it is stretched as a means to an end, then digitally mummified, and afterward ripped up into tiny details and rearranged to correspond to the capricious layouts of voluntary recollection. Thankfully, there are these other means, which feel gentler and even at times like a reconstructive salve, although at their heart they are no less plastic, no less revisionist, no less hallucinatory. Such is memory, and such it ever has been, even while my mind screams that it wasn’t always so, not in the beginning, not when everything was new, not when everyone was still here, not when we hadn’t traded infancy for actuality.

6 January 2025

I wanted to superpose the following three things. They come here in no particular order; probably there is an arrangement thereof that amounts best to something worth saying, though, even before I paste and frame here, already I think I'm spinning my wheels in the same way I have for a year now.

First is cut from a note of mine, 23 December 2024.

manifestly substantial degree to which common ground between the tracks he follows and the tracks I've long followed may readily be perceived by anyone.

I paste here in full the press release he wrote for Eyrie Alzate (Forces, Nov. - Dec. 2023), whose work first reminded me of Bonnard (Tatol clocks Vuillard instead) and then of Mark Grotjahn's new Opaque Landscapes from this year. Sean Tatol praised the press release; this of course puts an asterisk on anything I find in it (again, that from which the null hypothesis of "momentum" may never be ruled out), but, as I say, behold the manifest patches of common ground.

"What's unresolveable in life is stiff. Love, what's tender, forms around this in embrace of this manifestly unanswerable, all important, all knowing, unknown. This is what life is for. / Here we sit, spinning a web of our own productivity or not, in an age where everything must and cannot come to a halt. It feels honorable not to create. To not give. It has felt this way. / Things persevere, dimly, either pointlessly aware or shockingly ignorant of the simultaneous concussions of society, also in art. These methods are either subsumed in reflection or simply produce blinding glare. / What we see in Eyrie's art is a stare back into a simple oblivion: how and what is the force of obsession, processing, and creating, and what does it give to the foot travel of life. It has simple aims, and steps. / Eyrie has developed a mixed media process that unites digital and physical art making. She makes a digital image, sprawling with colored, textured layers and crevices of reference data for herself, and then prints it on letter size paper, usually in a self-induced frame. The printer, streaking and low tonal, is kept allegorically unprofessional as the mechanical passage, anticipated and acted upon. She then resumes her process by hand, reanimating and reburying the image, with gouache, pigment, and colored

pencil. / There is a distinctive edge to the roundabout. Conclusions are an inflated currency. In so many words, Eyrie's work is the result of a long winded examination, striving towards the unity of effort and grace - the same steadfastness in an individual that friendship and love also stems from. This point of attention is not an answer or an original conclusion, but clarity in the fold of pursuit. Facing not its own self, but facing the unresolvable and stepping further."

I'll only begin the enumeration of those patches.

"What's unresolveable in life is stiff. Love, what's tender, forms around this in embrace of this manifestly unanswerable, all important, all knowing, unknown. This is what life is for": I can read in here a very dense and very strong phrasing of what I've often said as "finitude (whether any of these four: the grasping at an origin in one's own birth, the fact of death, the unaccountability of Heidegger's thrownness, or the limitations on action in Heidegger's projection) has only one adequate response, and it is Love"; if this is too Thomistic, I've often said "the fact of our limits emits a cry, and we can heed this cry only in the posture of Love"; if this is too Rilke-Heidegger, I've said it countless other ways.

"These methods are either subsumed in reflection [In this I can read Hantaï's gesture which knows and condenses everything to which he was alive] or simply produce blinding glare [In this I can read Hantaï's silence, when he was silent]."

"What we see in Eyrie's art is a stare back into a simple oblivion: how and what is the force of obsession, processing, and creating, and what does it give to the foot travel of life." The best art (just as for Bois (if I'm right; it could have been anyone, even Duthuit) Matisse is so pleasurable because in looking we are made to paint along with him, and just as for Nancy we have to paint with Hantaï in order not to finish) gives the feeling that the gap between principle and practice and that between art and life have been smoothed over, as smooth as new skin, and are now traversable with the surety (if not the frictionlessness) of skates on ice, skis on snow. That is what art gives to the "foot travel" (an expression which voices the practical dimension of it) of life, and it gets there by sawing on thick catgut with well-resined horsehair: The catgut is the stuff of life, and it counts among its thick strings obsession, for one, and also memory, and desire, and caffeine, and sleep, and hangovers, and waking up, and dancing, and nudity, and praying before meals, and so forth (at least Herrigel got one of these right, even if "processing" and "creating" are either misses by comparison or I am missing what he's up to).

"It has simple aims, and steps." Lukas Quietzsch took care to specify this character, too, when he titled his 2022 Ramiken show Parallel Warnings in Simple Arrangements.

"The printer, streaking and low tonal, is kept allegorically unprofessional as the mechanical passage, anticipated and acted upon. She then resumes her process by hand …" The sometimes-seeming-unavoidable character of mechanical intervention, technical interference: Nancy would point out that techne is, even just as such, never abstractable from any picture (can never be written out of any equation); despite this, I've often insisted that I must (because of the deontological demand of art) at least show that even great contemporary art need not by a priori necessity acknowledge the existence of computers in the world; this jury is hung. In any case "allegorically unprofessional as the mechanical passage" reads to me luminously clear as the specification of one resolution of this question.

"The unity of effort and grace": The allure of the dream of unalienated labor, of course; but this phrasing of that dream also makes legible the fact that its allure seeps beyond (its quality extends beyond) any questions of labor strictu senso and floods all aspects of the being of a prismatic point-of-view, because "the unity of effort and grace" is (foremostly evidently) present

as (even if tacit) ideal in anything that Castiglione would mention, and also in anything where desire is the fluid whose plumbing we've taken into our hands. That is to say, anything sexual, and also anything aesthetic, keeping in mind that it may turn out that one (either one) of these spheres entirely encompasses the other.

And if that phrasing alone didn't yet make it legible enough, what immediately follows reaffirms the principle of continuity, the ultimate noncompartmentalizability of any prismatic point-of-view (with anything with a person, it is always all-affects-all, and that is the bottom line about how the mind works): that this unity is "the same steadfastness in an individual that friendship and love also stems from."

"This point of attention is not an answer or an original conclusion [as indeed "conclusions are an inflated currency" (this is from him supra)], but clarity in the fold of pursuit": Notwithstanding variously-recurring epidemics of assertion of "provisionality" and overreliance thereupon, yes, it is true that all art is made in the jointure-site situated between two nullities (and many other coincident demands besides). Clarity in the fold of pursuit is more eloquent than many of the ways I've tried to describe what I've let consolidate under the name crystalline as it unites with espresso cup.

And in this final mystery, it is asserted that--even if yet mysterious how--self-investment does not have to amount to self-enclosure (i.e., in art that is successful in/as re-Symbolism, there can be hermeticism without detachment--i.e., no neo-Platonism wins the re-Symbolist game at the end of the day): "Facing not its own self, but facing the unresolvable and stepping further."

Second is something Louise Glück wrote in 2022 which was published two days ago by The New Yorker. I was struck again with the same sense of identification--which is really a common ground in the department of the conceptualization of art, the department of the account of how a person makes art, the department which for me lives under the signs "prismatic" and "re-Symbolist"--that I felt when in Pittsburgh I read how she described phenomenologically how she writes. (Then, I focused on this line of hers: "I don't think I write through transition periods. What happens to me is that something stops, something ends, something is brought to a closure. Then I have nothing—I've used up whatever it is that I had and must wait for the well to fill up again. That's what you tell yourself, but it doesn't feel like a sanguine experience of sitting quietly while the well fills up. It seems like an experience of desolation, loss, even a kind of panic.")

Here, she revisits that qualia of the passivity of the writer, and conditions it with a counterpart in the activity of the editor (which is possibly, and surely often, the same person). "The need to write in this way was constant, but the ability to write at all came and went; often in my life it was gone for years. This was not something I could do anything about. / I had, in regard to making poems, no feeling of agency at all. Words and phrases came from nowhere; I rarely had any sense of what they meant or to what context they belonged. Nor could I access the source of these fragments. Whatever their source, I was either its victim (if I was hearing nothing) or its beneficiary." And earlier, to similar effect: "I was the writer; I was also the reader. The immersive creative act gave rise to analytic distance as the finished poem detached itself from its author. I had no control over the writing self, which seemed vulnerable to chance and whim, about which I had constant anxiety. But I had infinite control as a reader, a critic. Control and stamina and intense investment. Imperfect details and conventional perceptions tormented

me; these problems I attempted to resolve, even in childhood. The process was called revision, I later learned, though this word seemed a little calm for an effort so protracted and often so hopeless."

Here, she also gets deeper into an account of art which is (I think I see) fundamentally aligned with the one that I (in my "re-Symbolism") share with Prof. Landy, which for him in that class was called, most broadly, "transfigurative" (and small wonder: She was, at the time, his colleague, his co-faculty, or something; the university politics were lost on me, but it was clear from sentences here and there that he deeply admired her). The lines immediately preceding the above-pasted ones are her first offering of what could pass for a "re-Symbolist" or broadly "transfigurative" ars poetica: "Those poems were me; they represented or embodied me. But, at the same time, they were not me; they were a thing apart that could be studied and adjusted and made perfect, as my actual self could not be." This is enriched soon after with more: "The things I wrote down so urgently were not fixed thoughts projected from my brain onto the page. What I considered thought was a kind of seeking, a mission. But it was very difficult. This was not writing as rhetoric or catharsis. This was writing as transformation (or this is what I wanted it to be). I wanted to turn experience, often disappointment or hurt, into an externalized form that, in its accuracy and beauty, would both separate me from the experience and redeem it."

There are two more gemlike things which come near her statement's end.

Last is something that shows, with a great clarity and even a certain universality, how the device of doubling (always of so much interest to me lately) can meet all that which is in the air in her world. "I wrote a short book last summer, in prose, about a pair of twins living through their first year. One of them, despite being pre-verbal, is obsessed with the idea of the book she will one day write—is already writing in her head, though she has no words. Her name in my book is Marigold. Her sister, who is less driven, more gregarious, and easy to love, is Rose. And Marigold knows that she needs to write her book because she needs there to be something in the world 'that stood for herself as Rose stood for Rose.'"

And immediately before this, perhaps what in all her thinking caused me to think to attach these three disparate things to each other, because, here, art becomes the stuff of "the struggle to be, to exist," the ordinary, opposed to moments of ekstasis (mystical experiences, sexual communion, Weil's agony, etc.); which is to say, Glück's ars poetica enlists itself on the side of espresso cup: "How different all this is, in its essence and outcome, from physical life. In the great physical events, extreme bodily pleasure and extreme bodily suffering, the self disappears completely or is lost. Either way, an involuntary act, unlike the struggle to be, to exist, that underlies the need to write."

Third and last was something in "The Gaulish and the feudal as lieux de memoire in post-war French abstraction," something to which I was not receptive at the time of citing it in my thesis (could not be) because what I needed this article for was to triangulate something in Hantaï's own positioning which is clearly of less concern for Steven Harris (the author) than Mathieu's politics. But here it is, nevertheless, ringing with a relevant spirit to Herrigel's last word ("This point of attention is not an answer or an original conclusion, but clarity in the fold of pursuit. Facing not its own self, but facing the unresolvable and stepping further."), and everything before which aimed it, etc.:

"The sign was elaborated in a process of becoming that brought order out of chaos or

matter, yet it remained an open form, rather than assuming a more determinate meaning; it was oriented to the future rather than to the past of given cultural meanings. As he would write in 1975, in La Réponse de l'abstraction lyrique: ‘New values will only be created tomorrow by beginning from a lived experience that will become the only law* [* Here I wonder what Deleuze’s readings of the different historical regimes of sovereignty, law, God, etc. would have to communicate here, if anything useful--that is, if there is anything but universally unavowable “generality” / violence in all thinkings of anything that might be called “law”]; their quality and their legitimacy will be verified through their confrontation with life in its immediacy, and with other men ... Security vanquished, terror gone, we will live the apotheosis of risk, this festival of being’ (Mathieu, 1984: 14-15). / Painting in this conception becomes not only a battle but a rite, and Mathieu often compares his public performances of paintings, which took place between 1956 and 1962, to a sacred rite in which both artist and audience participate. (19) His painting practice is not, in this conception, a critique of form or composition, but a beginning from zero, from the void, which is positive in its realization of signs and of the individual. For Mathieu, art is a means of realizing being, as opposed to the having that is the hallmark of consumer society (Mathieu, 1984: 339-40). This being can only be realized through risk, including the risk of failure, which is opposed to the security that comes with having, which is a property of bourgeois culture. The elaboration of signs whose signification is still to be determined is an exemplary practice, then, of an ethical nature, which will attempt to offer a model of giving and of risk necessary to the realization of being. / These are aristocratic virtues …”

However, on an earlier pass, what is perhaps the same thing was posed by Harris in the following terms, which obviously is at points at direct odds with indispensable aspects of my account of art, even while for other brief flashes it seems to offer exhilarating correspondence and clarity: “What would replace form, for Tapie, was an art of the sign, which for both Tapie and Mathieu was a form of calligraphy that did not signify a particular meaning, as Islamic or Oriental calligraphy did, but that would be the existential sign of a lived experience during the making of a work, as the painting was created 'ex nihilo' each time (Mathieu, 1984: 478). The sign was to be the indexical trace of the sovereign individual who had mastered space, time and matter, but who had an aristocratic disdain for received form. For Mathieu, the ground of the canvas is a void, and the act of painting is conceived as an agonistic battle, not only with the void of the canvas, but with his own preconceptions of what a painting might be. The products of this process are signs, through which spirit is expressed. Unlike true calligraphy, these signs do not signify other than as traces of an elaboration of the self in its engagement with the canvas, as traces of an intensely lived moment. / Such views, of course, are not foreign to some of the more existential interpretations of abstract expressionism, such as that put forth by Harold Rosenberg, and like them they are antithetical to the relinquishing of mastery and the loss of self that are hallmarks of the automatic process. (16) It goes without saying that Mathieu and Tapie are never less than critical of surrealism, and refuse it any place in their conception of an 'other' art or of 'lyrical abstraction' (Mathieu's term, which he first used in 1947). (17) With the advent of the informel, Tapie claims: 'Western man finally discovers the Sign, and explodes in the vehemence of a transcendental calligraphy, of a hyper-significance drunk with the cruel vertigo of a becoming in its pure state' (Tapie, 1952: n.p.).”

A footnote emerging from the above is that in the bibliography of “The Gaulish and the feudal as lieux de memoire in post-war French abstraction” there are embedded certain sources which I perhaps should have incorporated into my thesis and which I ought certainly to visit still (and so I paste the entire thing):

Bandini, Mirella (1997) 'Interview de Michel Tapie', in Tapie: Un Art autre, pp. 91-8. Torino: Pozzo.

Beauvoir, Simone de (1955) 'La Pensee de droite, aujourd'hui', Les Temps modernes 112-13: 1539-75, and 114-15: 2219-61.

Bonnefoi, Genevieve (1958) 'L'"Avant-garde reactionnaire', ou quand les peintres se font doctrinaires', Les Lettres nouvelles, 6.e annee (59): 586-94.

Breton, Andre (1958) 'Le Temoignage d'Andre Breton', Les Lettres nouvelles, 6e annee (59): 592-4.

Breton, Andre (1965) 'Triomphe de l'art gaulois', in Le Surrealisme et la peinture, new edn, pp. 324-32. Paris: Gallimard.

Charles Estienne et l'art a Paris, 1945-1966 (1984) Paris: Fondation national des arts graphiques et plastiques.

Estienne, Charles (1950a) L'Art abstrait est-il un academisme? Paris: Editions de Beaune.

Estienne, Charles (1950b) 'Introduction' in Kandinsky. Paris: Editions de Beaune.

Estienne, Charles (1951) 'L'Art est une realite', Derriere le miroir 41: 1-4.

Estienne, Charles (1953) 'Abstraction ou surrealisme', L'Observateur 142 (29 January): 21.

Estienne, Charles (1954a) 'Dont acte', Combat-Art 5 (5 April): 1-2.

Estienne, Charles (1954b) 'Une Revolution: le tachisme', Combat-Art 4 (1 March): 1-2.

Estienne, Charles (1955a) 'Hommage a Kandinsky', Combat-Art 19-20 (11 July): 2.

Estienne, Charles (1955b) 'La Peinture et le surrealisme sont d'aujourdhui comme d'hier', Combat-Art 15 (7 March): 2.

Harris, Steven (2004) Surrealist Art and Thought of the 1930s: Art, Politics and the Psyche. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Harrison, Charles (1993) 'Abstraction', in Charles Harrison, Francis Frascina, and Gill Perry, Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century, pp. 184-262. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Kandinsky, Wassily (1954) Du spirituel dans l'art et dans la peinture en particulier. Paris: Editions de Beaune.

Lengyel, Lancelot (1954) L'Art gaulois dans les medailles. Montrouge-Seine: Editions Corvina.

Malraux, Andre (1950) The Psychology of Art, vol. 3: The Twilight of the Absolute, trans. Stuart Gilbert. New York: Pantheon Books.

Malraux, Andre (1953) The Voices of Silence, trans. Stuart Gilbert. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co.

Mathieu, Georges (1972) De la revolte a la renaissance: au-dela du tachisme. Paris: Gallimard.

Mathieu, Georges (1984) L'Abstraction prophetique. Paris: Gallimard.

Mathieu, Georges (2002) 'L'Eternite', in Antoine Joseph Assaf (ed.), Pierre Boutang, pp. 206-11.

Lausanne: L'Age d'homme.

Mathieu: La Liberte, c'est le vide (1993) Paris: Nouvelles Editions francaises.

Mathieu: 50 ans de creation (2003) Paris: Editions Hervas.

Nora, Pierre (1998) 'The Era of Commemoration', in Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past, vol. 3: Symbols, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, pp. 609-37. New York: Columbia University Press.

Perennite de l'art gaulois (1955) Paris: Musee pedagogique.

Pierre, Jose (1959) 'Les Templiers de la barbouille, ou la peinture au service du fascisme', Le Surrdalisme, meme no. 5: 63-4.

Pierre, Jose (ed.) (1982) Tracts surrealistes et declarations collectives, vol. 2: 1940-1969. Paris: Le Terrain vague.

Reynaud Paligot, Carole (1995) Parcours politique des surrdalistes 1919-1969. Paris: CNRS.

Reynaud Paligot, Carole (2002) 'Les Surrealistes et la guerre d'Algerie', French Cultural Studies 13: 33-47.

Rosenberg, Harold (1959) The Tradition of the New. New York: Horizon.

Rowell, Margit (1972) La Peinture--le geste--l'action: l'existentialisme en peinture. Paris: Klincksieck.

Simonin, Anne (2000) 'The Right to Innocence: Literary Discourse and the Post-war Purges (1944-1953)', trans. James E Austin, Yale French Studies 98: 5-28.

Sjolin, Jan-Gunnar (2001) 'Writing the Painting: Materials for a Study of Simon Hantai's Work

1953-1959', Konsthistorisk Tidskrift 70(3): 129-56.

Tapie, Michel (1952) Un Art autre, ou il s'agit de nouveaux devidages du reel. Paris: Gabriel-Giraud et Fils.

Tapie, Michel (1953) 'Incidences et devenirs de l'art de demain', Combat, 31 August, p. 7.

Vicens, Francesc (1960) Prolegomenes a une esthetique autre de Michel Tapie. Barcelona: Centre international de recherches esthetiques.

7 January 2025

From Mathieu, methods to embalm and love and one day re-enact (as a “rite”*) (just as I will one day re-enact the methods, too, of Lynn’s “Late July,” and the Kayemes invitation for Nicholas Verstraeten and Wiley Guillot, and everything that Holiday Lim and Sarah Wong did as Seasons Guide).

[* “Rite” as a term of indispensability for Mathieu: Just from my “The Gaulish and the feudal as lieux de memoire in post-war French abstraction”: “Painting in this conception becomes not only a battle but a rite, and Mathieu often compares his public performances of paintings, which took place between 1956 and 1962, to a sacred rite in which both artist and audience participate. (19) His painting practice is not, in this conception, a critique of form or composition, but a beginning from zero, from the void, which is positive in its realization of signs and of the individual. For Mathieu, art is a means of realizing being, as opposed to the having that is the hallmark of consumer society (Mathieu, 1984: 339-40). This being can only be realized through risk, including the risk of failure, which is opposed to the security that comes with having, which is a property of bourgeois culture. The elaboration of signs whose signification is still to be determined is an exemplary practice, then, of an ethical nature, which will attempt to offer a model of giving and of risk necessary to the realization of being.”]

The methods to embalm I find illuminated by five ephemerae which a gallery (M. Champetier) now offers for sale.

The eminently imitable practice (a habitus which one--I, you--can don like a glove) of preferring one painting to another.

The postcard of Gstaad on which nothing more needed be inscribed than “Amicales pensées / Mathieu”.

The titling of a book “Sept Jours de Mathieu,” and its bringing-out, with whatever practicalities that would have entailed then. Mathieu is often denigrated as a technician of self-promotion. I find, to the contrary, that so many of his practices (these, for example) are insufficiently dismissed by the mere resort to such a characterization. There is something else in the making of this book, and something else in its inscription, here, to the same Julien who received his Gstaad card.

Just as easily dismissed, and just as unsuccessfully, is this emblem he made for his own stationery. He made a device for Pierre Boutang’s La Nation française, too, a misstep I see as identical in significance to the fact that his address, apparently, was Avenue Léopold II.

Rohmer avidly subscribed to La Nation Française, says Antoine de Baecque on page 122 of The Films of Eric Rohmer: French New Wave to Old Master. On the same page I learn that Rohmer “was also a member of the Louisquartorziens, zealous defenders of the genius and philosophy of Louis the XIV, led by the eccentric Georges Comnène, who also called himself ‘Duke of Santiago de Compostela.’” Another example joins the Comte de Rola, then.

But I have to say again that I only avow their adoption of imaginative aristocratic titles because, in their cases, it has undeniably stepped across the line from pragmatic pretense (in the sense of “pretender”) to the other side, no less serious but now not practical, To remain on the other side of the line is to be as absurd as the “Integralism” of those who look to J. D. Vance as a good thing. Maybe, in their time, Mathieu and Rohmer were both on the wrong side of this line.

Probably. Unlike the restoration of a Capetian monarch, the "question of Algeria" was an actual issue being "answered," with real consequence, in public, and Rohmer and Mathieu both went so far as to contribute to it. But I remain convinced that Hantaï never went this far. His Notes confusionnelles are "réactionnaires" only in the literal sense, the sense that the title alone actualizes, not in any implicit other sense beyond that. An actual look at Hantaï the person makes this obvious, and makes obvious too the mismatch of the sense in which the Surrealists who authored "Coup de semonce" meant their epithet "Baron Hantaï." His co-signature of the Cérémonies commémoratives with Mathieu does not constitute a transgression of this particular line I'm speaking of, either, because Geneviève Bonnefoi is precisely wrong, here, quoted in "The Gaulish and the feudal": "the celebration of Spanish colonialism in 1957 can only serve to reinforce the views of those who wished to retain North Africa as an integral part of France." The celebration of Spanish colonialism can obviously serve any number of things, and it makes no sense to attribute to the author of the "Notes confusionnelles" an Algerian wish as a sole intention. The same tendency for interested and deliberate generalization places a bizarrely diverse list of names under the somewhat comic label of "a significant conservative tendency in post-war intellectual and cultural life." Incidentally, that list includes such lights as Denis de Rougemont (dear to me since in my Troubadours class I learned of his Love in the Western World) alongside Louis-Ferdinand Celine, Gabriel Marcel, and Emil Cioran (by extension, Cioran could have added to the list his friends Beckett and Michaux, in Hantaï's highest heaven, and Celan, and Eliade, whom Harry was reading when he visited me last).

Something else in this photograph that Sept Jours de Mathieu contains. And what does it deign to say?

He dedicated one also to Edmonde Charles-Roux.

She was editor of Vogue who convoked in those pages "writers as Francois-Regis Bastide, Violette Leduc and Francois Nourissier or photographers such as Guy Bourdin, Henry Clarke or William Klein, or designers Christian Dior, Yves Saint Laurent and Emanuel Ungaro" until she was ousted for her intention to put a black girl on the cover; recipient also of the Prix Goncourt for Oublier Palermo, and above all, for me, a name which can be emblematic of the allure of a time and place and a way of moving, a way of arranging objects and being photographed--of a piece, I imagine, with the cohort Hantaï would have met chez les Maeght during the opening for which he boarded a plane for the only time in his life, and of a piece, clearly, with the life (just the habitus, really) London Helly invented for his Collector.

Fred Deux: I do not know whether I am put off by a certain fetishization, perhaps-hallucinated, of a wrongly-construed peinture, a construal that he'd share with such painters as Degottex and Loubchansky and the rest of Estienne's crowd, who repulse me so strongly (something, even if I can't say what, separates them unbridgeably from 1958 Hantaï, Reigl, Michaux, Tobey). If not, his etchings take their place alongside Klee's Perseus, etc., sainted.

Tonight I unexpectedly became unbearably sad. Now even 9:24 seems to me like an acutely sad time, reminding me of the Cougars football team, the particularity of my life, its happy parts. I can no more bear the thoughts of the particular details of evenings before elementary school days, evenings after dinner when I was six years old and it was 9:24 p.m., or cold weekend mornings with mouthguards and aluminum bleachers, no more bear these than the particular details I looked around and saw at Nana's bedside when I arrived to sit beside her body. It was this that made me cry uncontrollably, in an unexpected way, when I arrived. The pillow on which she rested, the red one I also saw in pictures from 2004 on our brown leather living room couch. The fact that her hair had a particular length and no other,

Having broken my stunned silence about this, it now feels wrong to say what I was going to say, and yet I have to, because it was this that made me see that strange kind of sadness--strange, but I can no more sidestep it for its strangeness, I am still by it utterly defeated, forced to ignore, little by little and then semipermanently, unable to prevail over it.

I spent much of the day looking at job postings online. Last night, over drinks and a newly unwrapped board game in which we laughed loudly at the rearrangement of magnetic words, I presented certain dilemmas on which I repeatedly become stuck, which prevent me from successfully acquiring a job. I reached an advice consensus

And so, tonight at 9 something p.m., I read this and cry, on the website of the label manufacturer Brook and Whittle.

Maggie E., employed 1 year, in St. Louis, Missouri. "I like that I am challenged and rewarded for performing my job successfully. I enjoy getting up in the morning and coming to work. For the first time in my working career, I feel taken care of, secure in my job and have benefits that are worth something."

I cry because of what I read. Cry thinking, eventually, of the face of Frances McDormand, who acted a character who worked in an Amazon distribution center. Cry thinking, too, of my mother, whom I regret telling that this actress reminded me of her after I watched that movie three years ago, because my mother does not find her to be a good-looking woman. And yet I watched her performance in this film and was moved by it as though I were watching my mother carry out

this employment, arriving at this jobsite and performing these tasks and coming home with whatever mix of tiredness, necessity, provision, and remaining mix of possible emotions. As though, and yet truthfully, because my mother, too, carries out employment, arrives at a jobsite, performs tasks, comes home with whatever mix of tiredness, necessity, provision, and remaining mix of possible emotions. All these things with their particularity--it is like this and no other way--and I can no more bear it than I can bear to see my grandmother lie, having died, in a room in an excruciatingly particular house and

My chest hurts, right in the middle. I think of all the times I read of people reflexively misattributing pain of any variety to their having just eaten. I know that I can die suddenly, and I know that, if I do, it will be in a particular place and no other, inattention to which would only be a coincidence of the probable rushing of circumstance and would therefore not be adequately ordained, not avowable. These particulars, or contingency: I cannot console myself to accept them. I sat, shaking, crying into my hands, on the side of her bed, and finally wiped my hands and nose and eyes for the last time, stood up, and eventually left the house, sometime after she did, wheeled over her threshold which she hadn't crossed in thirteen months, lifted into the back of a minivan operated by this funeral home that is ours because it is owned by a family with which ours is friends. It is just some automobile, they were just two oldish guys for whom I feel nothing, to whom I nodded respectfully and from whom I accepted a handshake or two and that was that, they said words revealing a deep commonality of life experience with my mother and my aunt but I had never seen them before and never will again.

In a photograph my Nana feeds me milk from a bottle and I am only a couple months old. There is behind us a yellow toy of some kind that I must have stood next to, that must have been bought for me, and I look at it in the photograph and there is not even a chance that there is any familiarity or recognition in it. A company manufactured this toy of plastic, I did with it whatever babies do with such things, it passed out of my life forever, and now it reminds me that to me it is no different from my uncle's smile, which likewise passed permanently out of my life before I could do anything with it, "do anything with it," that which means nothing really but that I am desperate for some alternative to this state in which there is not even a chance that there is any familiarity or recognition in it.

Is it "sentimental"? What is sentimental? I am committed to finding answers to the questions above, and I think the way whose first steps Proust marked is the way that it will be done. (Prof. Landy helps me find Proust's steps and choose mine accordingly; incidentally, the last note of mine, which Bella said read like the opening of a book, at which I was somewhat unsatisfied because what good is a beginning if the problem is that I cannot come up with where to go from here, incidentally that note reads like a realization of what in all of Prof. Landy's accounts was the problem that Baudelaire's and Mallarmé's and Proust's art set about to solve, a problem for which a workable but aporia-spawning shorthand name is "contingency.") If this route be "sentimental" then fine, but I'd still like to know what it means. Maybe it means "spa town" would be the name of a gallery that I'd create in the manner I described a month ago, and its webpage would be mostly white but would display in a small rectangle a rotating group of eight-

odd grayscale images (retrieved from the internet) of ethnographic balneology from one of a randomly-selected set of places (a set counting, perhaps, thirty or so, retrieved from the Wikipedia redirection page which I copied a year and two months ago).

I want to practice Kurrent for purposes of use in paintings (that may also make use of the windows I found and of Brook and Whittle economy-optimized plastic-graphic alchemy) and I want to practice with it a hand reminiscent thereof that I would, by contrast, be able to use for correspondence such as the "pensées amicales" that Mathieu sent and such as the messages I imagine writing to Luke Herrigel, Julien Nguyen, Eyrie Alzate, and bloghouse musicians.

7 January 2025

I am rereading some of Endo's Stained Glass Elegies, reading them for the third time, with two or three years between each visitation. I will remind myself what I thought of them the last time; I think it was on the subway from Bed Stuy to Fort Tryon to see the Cloisters. This time, I've begun with "Retreating Figures," which, I think, is one Dr. Pruit assigned us, though this might not be the case if there is more than one story with a myna bird. I am always envying Bella her memory. (Upon reviewing my notebook from April 2021, I find I didn't make any mention of these stories.)

My emotional affectedness opened up vertiginously all in a moment on its fourth page. "As I waited, I remembered what I had seen through the window of a room across the courtyard two years before, during the summer just after I entered the hospital. / The patient in that room had been a man in his fifties with leukemia. His young wife, always dressed in a white apron, had cared for him faithfully. Near the end of summer, I saw him wipe his mouth with a piece of paper and then stare fixedly at it. That was the day he realized that his gums were haemorrhaging. Once the gums haemorrhage, the leukemia has advanced beyond all hope of recovery. [It is at this point that Nana became centered in my thoughts as I read; she had not been (not in relation to this story, I mean), even though hers is my only hospital-room experience of any significance and recency. This medical sign, "Once the gums haemorrhage, the leukemia has advanced beyond all hope of recovery," this non-obvious deduction that all advised by medical personnel must take as a certainty, sent me doubly to her bedroom at home and to her hospital room. To her hospital room, because of the certainty Nurse April ("Nurse Ratched") deduced from the state of her "Kennedy Terminal Ulcer" (a certainty she refuted for thirteen months). To her bedroom, because in it, in the days after her death, I was recounted a fact in connection to Bobby's death, and to Grandpa: The esophagus bleeds in late stages of alcoholism, at which point "if you drink again, you will die"; Grandpa had his wounds cauterized; even under this knowledge, Bobby went out to drink with his friends, and died, drowned, technically, between the floor of his apartment and a hospital to which Grandpa rushed but Nana did not accompany. All this

interjection just to say what was mind-centered at the end of this sentence.] / Then, as now, I watched through the window each day, wondering what this man and wife would do. I know it was ill-mannered of me to spy on them, but I wanted to imprint a sharp image of human grief upon my eyes. [When I looked at Nana's face, was there any desire of this kind in me? I never would have used these words, but would they be true? Why did I feel, as I did, that I was drinking with my eyes?] And then one evening, with the setting sun blazing, I saw the two clinging to one another like little birds. [It is at this point that I have to pause because the psychic pain I am experiencing becomes too acute, the identification too strong, the identification of the inevitable eventuality of my own every grief transmuting, for better or for worse, certainly not for any effective good, into this state of clinging, most often to Bella, but in the recent case to the rail of a hospice bed. Clinging with the hands, and a gaze alternately perfectly clear and too liquid to see through, and when clear, too rigidly fixed to tear away into bodily movement.] They were seated on the bed, their eyes riveted on the floor. The husband who was about to die, and the wife who was about to be left behind, clutched one another's hands" (139). I cling always to Bella, cling tightly, eventually, at some point in my every spasm of grief that one day I will lose her, in one of two ways, or maybe three. Caught between knowledge that to cling like this is nothing but a particularly poignant version of denial, and a wishful thought that it may be, despite this, proper conduct, the right course of action, in some strange way, because of some (Heideggerian in broad method but from entirely different starting-points and through entirely different patterns of inference) working-out of deductions about something like "the human condition" (though, stepping true, I'd never use this phrase).

My mind skipped a beat, my eyes seemed to momentarily slow the rate at which they transmitted sense data while chills spread across my back, when I saw the fountain in this photograph.

I had just been thrilled, smiling and talking loudly to my mom and contacting Bella, when, after five or six seconds, I deciphered the word "Chernobbio" here.

On one register my mind processed a statistical sort of bewilderment, wondering at the numbers which turn out to say that Cernobbio is a town of 6,000, only accounting for exactly one percent of the Como area. In parallel, there was a much more real wonder, invoking and then weeding

through all the familiar ghostly narrativizations to distill from trope the pure mist of ghostliness itself, because, when I was there, I vividly experienced it and I vividly remember, when I walked out from the hotel's lobby to this fountain, my mind was flooded with thoughts of Grandpa and Nana, returned to me (with such recognizable force; Proust's name attaches to this force, but it must be eternal and universal) at a scent, what must have been the smoke of a particular kind of cigarette, or a coincidence of layers thereof, and humidity, and vegetation, water, leather, tile, pavestones. On 1 January 2023 I remembered this fountain with the words "that beautiful time in Cernobbio when we would walk out in front of the hotel, me and Bella and Daph, and when the three of us walked around behind and to the two different sides of the hotel, variously, towards the wedding on the one hand and we could get gelato, and on the other hand around behind and to that small church and onward down that long road." On the night of 14 August 2022, my words were these:

…

But most closely broaching that feeling, that feeling which now lures one into ghost stories, were my words on 29 August 2022.

Just inside the frame of this photo, on the right, is a sign for the hotel Nala selected for us three, in order to pay for half of the room I'd share with Bella.

Just outside the left edge of this photo, by a margin of ten or fifteen feet, one would find the window out of which Bella and I looked.

And the moon that Bella and I watched over these hills from one of the benches just outside the right frame of this photograph.

My grandfather stood by this fountain and took a photo that I nearly replicated.

Here is mine.

In the afternoon of our second day there, I took this picture of Bella, in part to memorialize my Proustian moment.

I believe that the hotel visible through the window of our room is the Regina Olga, which is almost certainly where they stayed, inferring that their photographs of the fountain from above were taken from the window of their room, and that the photograph which just barely includes the “Hotel Miralago” sign was taken to show the side of their hotel from which their room looks out.

A photograph from the internet pairs with another of theirs to confirm:

9 January 2025

If I make my notes into a writing-object, then names like “Heidegger” and so forth (signs whose specificity I preserve in my notes so that they continue to point in directions I’ll need again yet) ought to be smudged over so that, as in a book by Gerald Murnane, there is no doubt that a name may stand for more than that of it which is reproduced right here. Preserve the words, sure, and should someone care (as with Sebald appropriating Kafka) they may know; but, for within-the-object quality, I may make a transformation like the following.

Take something like this:

I drank two cans of beer and began reading (rereading?) an article on “Heidegger’s Aesthetics.” Distinct washing-over by a memory of walking down streets in Amsterdam, maybe on the first morning after our arrival, that blessed altered-consciousness “stolen time” which jetlag bequeaths as restitution for the initial nausea--I mean the genuine wakefulness experienced at impossibly early hours of the morning after traveling several thousand miles eastward (for reasons on one level obvious but on another level suspicious, I have no memory of the morning after any of my three westward crossings of the Atlantic). Here is the section of the article during which I was flooded with sensations from that morning--I remember (propositionally) that I was on Pieter Cornelisz Hoofstraat and Van Baerlestraat (I remembered not the names but the locations and could immediately find the names on the map); I was in the Vondelpark just after, and spent some time talking on the phone with Bella on the Museumplein just before; and the air was pregnantly wet: not heavy from humidity, but I could tell there was rain proximate, and sure enough mists of the tiniest drops (truly more fine than what I normally call “mist”) did arrive. / I see no link between the words before my eyes and the images that rearranged themselves inside my eyes, no link, I mean, with any capacity for explaining the images: “This returns us to the bigger question we have been pursuing, and which we are now prepared to answer: Why exactly does Heidegger object to our contemporary tendency to understand and approach art in this aesthetic way? In the revealingly titled essay we have been drawing on, “The Age of the World Picture,” Heidegger explains that “the process by which art gets pushed into the horizon of aesthetics” is neither conceptually neutral nor historically unimportant. On the contrary, the

historical process by which Western humanity came to understand art as “aesthetics” is so freighted with significance that it needs to be recognized as “one of the essential phenomena of the contemporary age” (QCT 116/GA5 75). Strikingly, Heidegger goes so far as to assert that our tendency to treat art as aesthetics is just as significant for and revealing of our current historical self-understanding as are the increasing dominance of science and technology, the tendency to conceive of all meaningful human activity in terms of culture, and the growing absence of any god or gods in our Western world (QCT 116–7/GA5 75–6). This is a surprising and deliberately provocative claim, one apparently meant to provoke us into noticing and thinking through something we ordinarily overlook. ...”

And it might become like this:

I drank two cans of beer and began reading someone’s words which tried to make sense of the words of someone else. The words which were of such interest to me that I set about to fixate upon them even through an intervening refraction-glass had tried, in their time, to make sense of art in the abstract.

As I read I was overtaken with a distinct washing-over by a memory of walking down streets in Amsterdam, maybe on the first morning after my arrival there, in that blessed stolen time of altered consciousness which jetlag bequeaths as restitution for its initial nausea.

I am speaking of the dislocated but authentic wakefulness experienced at impossibly early hours of the morning after one has traveled several thousand miles eastward. (For reasons on one level obvious but on another level suspicious, I have no memory of the morning after any of my three westward crossings of the Atlantic.)

I remember, as one remembers a fact, that I was on Pieter Cornelisz Hoofstraat and Van Baerlestraat. I remembered not the names but the locations, and I could immediately find the names on a map. I was in the Vondelpark just after, and had spent some time talking on the phone with Belle on the Museumplein just before. The air was pregnantly wet, a humidity that was not heavy though I could yet tell there was rain in proximate future, and sure enough mists of the tiniest drops did arrive.

These drops I call the tiniest were truly more fine than what I normally call “mist.”

I see no link between the words before my eyes and the images that rearranged themselves inside my eyes, no link, I mean, with any capacity for explaining the images.

Before my eyes are words like “This returns us to the bigger question we have been pursuing, and which we are now prepared to answer: Why exactly does he object to our contemporary tendency to understand and approach art in this aesthetic way? In the revealingly titled essay we have been drawing on, he explains that the process by which art gets pushed into the horizon of aesthetics is neither conceptually neutral nor historically unimportant. On the contrary, the historical process by which Western humanity came to understand art as ‘aesthetics’ is so freighted with significance that it needs to be recognized as one of the essential phenomena of the contemporary age. Strikingly, he goes so far as to assert that our tendency to treat art as aesthetics is just as significant for and revealing of our current historical self-understanding as are the increasing dominance of science and technology, the tendency to conceive of all meaningful human activity in terms of culture, and the growing absence of any god or gods in our Western world. This is a surprising and deliberately provocative claim, one apparently meant to provoke us into noticing and thinking through something we ordinarily overlook.”

I take these words and I hold them in my heart with my eyes. They are somehow dear to me because of the memories which returned to me while they were before my eyes. This would be

true no matter whether the images were brought back by something local to the words themselves or something independent of them in the beer I drank. Of course, they were brought back by something in the conjunction thereof.

A separate note on a similar level: When my coiled-up sentences are laid out in a legible new language, what will it be? Murnane's, or Sebald's, or Fosse's, or Saoirse Bertram's, or Zans Brady Krohn's? None and all, of course, but to compact this new prism of mine with its hyperspecific composition, I have to turn over all these precious stones in my heart, turn them over and step deliberately.

10 January 2025

On the two-hundred-fifth page of Inland Murnane reproduces these words from "a book by W. H. Hudson: "...the expression peculiar to red flowers varies infinitely in degree, and is always greatest in those shades of the colour which come nearest to the most beautiful flesh-tints…"
And I read this and I think of what I once heard said of the cello, that, of all the instruments, its tonal range is the one which most closely resembles that of the human voice. Perhaps, when I first heard this said of the cello, it was not said of the violoncello itself but rather of the viol da gamba, with the added nuance that, if this quality distinguishes the cello, then in this the cello is only exceeded by the viol da gamba; but it can nevertheless be taken to be roughly true of the cello, tucking away the caveat by one of two means, either following the line that the viol da gamba is a sort of cello or the line that it is not among that set which comes to mind when one says "all the instruments."
If I was made to think of what I once heard said of the cello when I read these words about the begonia, then it must be because the two arms of this memory-operation have a kernel in common, the pivot upon which my memory performed its pulling; and if there is such a kernel, what must it be?
I hold the distillate of this correspondence-abstraction.
I add that, listening one month ago in West Texas to Aaron's violinist, María Dueñas, what I heard said of the cello entered my thought. I have never taken it as an axiom to apply to listening practice, an a priori principle to inform what I may call my taste in music, but, when I winced at the high pitches I was hearing, and could not bear them even for all the emotion with which they dripped, it came into my thinking to explain why, perhaps, that might be.
I was tired, then, and short-slept, and I could not speak into a phone over the noise of the road without quickly accruing ache in the head, and there were many sounds which would have made me wince. Still, I felt that from this percept and the thought which it surfaced, I did learn something non-local about my listening to sounds.

Half a page later, Murnane recalls "The Language of Flowers, illustrated by Kate Greenaway and

published (updated) by Frederick Warne and Company, London and New York." I picture a handful of flowers correspondent to Inland, a handful whose components each come from one of these two named flowers, an abstract registration-object inscribing something deep within and wide-reaching through Inland, when he writes "Beside lilac I read: the first emotions of love. Beside tamarisk I read: crime." (I know the look of neither of these at the name only. Lilac, of course, sends me back primarily to Hantaï, acting in this way as a sign; as a word, tamarisk only rotates me among tamarind and tamarin.)

As I near the end of his book, of the several movements (too many to easily list) I would describe in order to display the way in which I loved it, two are foremost, and the rest may be gathered under a broad heading of "chords of resonance," or "braiding manoeuvers," or "choral strains," or a better phrase that I feel only by a hair unable to produce.

Most beautiful of all of these several movements is the invocation of the smell of the grasslands through a curtain of falling rain, which was repeated across Inland. I state this with only a certain confidence checked by the activated knowledge of imprecision of all memory: Such is the character of every percept wrought by the particular method of repetition Murnane employs.

Of the several repetitions I remember, I find one upon quickly flipping: "... that she would lay my pages under the eyes of men and women who have never seen, nor will ever see, the Great Alfold, but who want to breathe with ecstasy, through the curtain of the falling rain, the scent of invisible yet enduring flowers with mournful-sounding Magyar names" (26).

And all of them were rewritten (whether by the operation I understand as the all-in-all of the Eucharist, or by what Deleuze understood as the nature of all repetition in which in the first there are all the subsequent, or something) when, on the one-hundred-ninetieth page, Murnane writes: "Later a fine rain falls. The drops cling to skin, or they slide slowly down the sides of grass-stems. The feel of rain on grasslands is no more than the brushing past of a wing of water. [I wonder whether this last line is a singular touch of excess.] / Whenever I want to read about the rain on grasslands, I take down from my shelves the book Prous: A Biography, by André Maurois, translated by Gerard Hopkins, and published by Meridian Books Inc. of New York in 1958. / In the last paragraph of that book I read the words: Yet it is his exaltation that has brought us the perfume of the hawthorn trees that died long years ago; that has made it possible for men and women who have never seen, nor will ever see, the land of France, to breathe with ecstasy, through the curtain of the falling rain, the scent of invisible yet enduring lilacs."

The blue sky with its shining sun has just replaced three days' thick brilliant white sky in time for less than an hour of day before dusk dims the house, too early again.

I sit and I fantasize about drinking something which will come to me as a deliverance.

I wonder to myself whether I will tonight drink the other half of the bottle of my mother's red wine, a pinot noir from Crema, which, she says, is not too expensive and can be purchased at Costco, but which is nevertheless a nicer wine than I ever buy for myself, though I have, despite

my best efforts to forestall this cultivation, come to enjoy wine that costs more than twenty dollars distinctly more than I enjoy wine that costs not much more than ten dollars.

I had not yet thought about the remaining wine in this bottle today, but when the thought of it came to me now, came slowly enough for me to watch it as it came, it came to me, I sense, as a deliverance.

I continue to watch this thought as it continues to move. It moves like this: I then wonder whether I will feel, having in the near future finished the bottle, satisfied in the intoxication upon me bestowed. If I do not, I think, perhaps I will add to it another drink, and the other drink that I have is my overproof Jamaican rum in its two bottles from two different distilleries. (I do not really think this "perhaps" structure. Really, I experience a wondering, and then an image of my rum arrives, and attached to this image is some aspect of hypotheticality, and also attached to this image is a thought of the unpleasant aching in the top of my head that I felt near the end of the evening on which Bella and I drank to much of this rum, an aching which I described just then as like a tearing or a splitting or more vaguely an outward lateral pull at the top-middle of my skull or brain.)

One might suspect that I come to the word "deliverance" by way of an abstract thought of my situation as something from which I needed delivery, and subsequently identified drink as an entity that convened to this position. This is decisively not the case. I come to the word "deliverance" at the end of a short but deliberate search for the word that best corresponds to the feeling, or the little glow, or the mist with a specific shape, that defines my experience of the imagining of a drink I may have.

This imagining is an indulgence of a very certain kind. It is not that I think that to imagine drink, to look forward to it in a special way, is a bad thing, an inordinate fondness and as such a threat to my health.

If I identified my inclination to imagine drink as an inordinate fondness, I would look upon this inordinate fondness with a mildly pleasant sense of interest, not with an unpleasant sense of badness.

Rather, my unpleasant sense of badness arrives at a layer's remove, attached to the way I look upon my hypothetical inclination to look with a mildly pleasant sense of interest on an inordinate fondness, were it to exist. And this inclination would not be bad directly, as a threat to health, but rather because I would be unable to prove that my mildly pleasant sense was the pure interest of curiosity and not the impure interest of self-mythologizing, attention seeking.

I even suspect that Bella has traced some distance along the deductions here delineated, both real and hypothetical, and that this is why she seems uninterested and disinclined to engage when I ask her whether my enjoyment of drink seems to her to be within the bounds of normalcy.

I finished Inland and had to pause longer at the last words than I expected I would. Then I read Murnane's new interview in The Paris Review and had to pause somewhere near the middle and think hard about the way in which I feel inclined to deliberately effectuate some distance between myself and himself, my patterns of thought and his patterns of thought, my proclivities and his proclivities.

But when I read to its end, having experienced a certain vertigo of identification at the first mention of his “Antipodean” archive, and even more upon hearing of the conditions (durational, timing-wise, employment-constrained, etc.) of his writing, and then maximally at the interview’s end, I sent a message to Bella: “If you have the time to read this, it is very eerie because he is 85 as he says it but in a striking and obvious way he is just like me.” If she does read the interview she will understand from my message that the identification, to which I have already attached the word “vertigo,” might from a certain angle connect itself to the word “fear” for me, and also, from a different angle still, to the word “hope.”

I rejoice in the prospect of tucking again into the material I have amassed for myself looping around the artist Lukas Quietzsch and the gallery Kayemes and the arty collective Lynn (Soundcloud, Bandcamp, Seasons Guide, etc.). I thrill to think that this tucking is nearer by the day. I hold this joy and thrill at some distance from myself because to identify it as such has a certain poignancy and a certain gentle absurdity and a deep and common sadness which I accept as the dominant tenor of this time in my life. “Time” here means these years, these one or two years, say.

12 January 2024

“Lover”

I

It has been long since I have held my lover’s body close to mine.

I do not use the word “lover” because it means something it ought not mean. As does “lust.”

This morning I slept from 4 a.m. to 9 a.m. and I dreamt a photograph. Not all dreams play out sequentially. There are several ways in which I have dreams that have no inherent duration or sequence. I dreamt a photograph that Bella took for me in April of 2021. It was the last dream I had during my sleep. Perhaps I dreamt this photograph while I was waking up. (Perhaps this is indispensable to the iterations of wakings-up I plan to stage, indispensable to the “re-constitution” (“undeath”) (the choice of any word, including these, sacrifices most of what I want to crystallize) which I have spoken of as the meaning of awakening.)

I’d like to always say the word “lust” in German, a German word in an English sentence every time I say it. So that I ask myself in the halls of the Dallas Museum of Art whether I lust, not whether I lust. As I walk through these halls with a face like a scythe.

Because of the lust in Rilke's "Rose, Oh reiner widerspruch / Lust / Niemandes Schlaf zu sein, / Unter soviel Lidern." Because this translates better to "Rose, O pure contradiction / Desire / To be no one's sleep, / Under so many lids."
(On 7 July 2024 I asked, "And what is this harmony that I find (in the negative: its imprint, its desire, its lust as in "Rose, oh reiner widerspruch, / Lust, / Niemandes schlaf zu sein / Unter soviel / Lidern") at the bottom of so many piles of wet leaves?")

Desire, then, if I perform a too-easy substitution of a translation for an etymological parent for fear of pollution by the etymological child.

When once I said that caffeine is the motor-force in and behind all things (while thinking about the art work of Molly Rose Lieberman, while walking through the shortcut at the top of Griffith Park), really what I was referring to was not caffeine but whatever remains as the in-common distillate when you overlay love, and caffeine, and desire, and lust, and then remove from the picture everything in love, and in caffeine, and in desire, and in lust, that is not in common with all of the others. The center of the Venn rose of these four.

II

I looked in paintings for images of my lover.

On this search I saw Lot's daughters and said aloud "cette horrible femme," with the memory of Ezra Pound's "cette mauvaiseh venggg," with the intonation of Willem Dafoe's Italian when he played Pier Paolo Pasolini.

I saw the enormous statue from Vanuatu, carved from the inverted base of a tree, with a dumbfounding spatial unity. His eyes are two pinwheel-painted disks, nearly back to back. His chin or tongue is incomprehensible, unnameable. He holds his sex. The object-label names his "overt sexuality," but I do not know what is to be understood in this. He holds his sex. The phallus is neither exaggerated nor even evidently erect. But it is there, and his hands frame it, they indicate it, they make it uniquely present, whether or not there is any action ("holds") his hands perform. Perhaps he does not hold his sex. He makes it present.

I, too, shall make and inhabit a secret society. He facilitated, though this was just one of his aspects, entry into a sukwe.

I looked for images of my lover. There is a belt which imposes itself into the breasts of Durga, or imposes itself over her breasts' nipples, as she slays the buffalo demon. Most forms bear no resemblance to my lover. Most, whether or not this is beside the point, are much too large in some way or another.

I look for an image of my lover upon an Etruscan mirror of polished bronze. I catch her only fleetingly, in the alignment of a right hand with that which it may press against in fabric-mediated contact. It may only be in perspectival alignment, her right hand and that which is behind it through the fabric, but it may equally be that the alignment is not merely perspectival but rather a direct contact, a pressure.

I catch her only fleetingly, and the image is clearest in three strokes, schematic in character, but containing the highest clarity I am to find, and containing it in the relative angles which uniquely define their interrelation, in their slightest curve, in the utter precision with which they lift and leave off, vanish without terminating, as does a crease.

"A young man in a tunic and wreath plays the double pipe." I'll play; all art is such a song; all artists feel the pressure of that hand right there. "Lasa, an attendant of the Etruscan goddess of love." Whether under the pseudonym Belle or under the pseudonym Lasa, a lover attends the Etruscan goddess of love. Perhaps a nymph, but in any case an attendant, oriented-towards, just as the player of the double pipe is oriented-towards. So much the more poetic if in this they are asymmetrical, not oriented just each toward the other with austere correspondence. In such a system, with such closure, that which is defined as the commonality of caffeine and lust and love and desire cannot inhere. So Lasa is attendant of the Etruscan goddess of love, and the player of the double pipe plays for Lasa; she presses her hand to him, there, and he bodies forth his song, and she is taking a step. A wholeness better by far than a symmetry. It is unclear whether this be "harmony."

"Lover" has never been the right word, not even when Nico sang it beautifully. Even then it was not the word for what I mean, because she sang, "I had a lover, I don't think I risk another these days." Had. A lover, then, is something of which another is imaginable. My Belle, my Lasa, is the only one there was in the beginning, the only one there is now, and the only one there ever shall be, in saecula saeculorum.

Four years ago, my muscles were large. My face had a different shape. My hair was long, but not too long, and lighter in color. My muscles were large in a particular way, so that my body as a whole seemed to have more of a pronounced form, as a whole, than it does now. Now, I would rather be thin unto frailty, slow-moving and rarely drawn upright, in large clothing, like Klaus Kinski's Nosferatu. But I am not this, nor will ever be, and I would rather be that former body of mine than my new body.

Now, I feel a certain shame when I am naked, particularly when I wear no shirt and I sit down.

Still, my lover makes me believe that she loves my body.

Now, I do not think I am anything very special, in the body.

Still, my body is perhaps the only exception to my general distaste for the nude male form.

When I saw Modigliani's boy in short pants, the same painter's Nu couché from 1917 entered my imagination. This, I thought, was my lover. But it was not, really. If it was, then it was only because Amedeo really loved her. And he did; I can see his love written clearly in the shape and surface of every shape and surface, that shape and surface which inheres in the gradation of tones, that gradation of tones with a luminosity in which Modigliani has no available comparison besides the Botticelli who painted Mars asleep across from Venus, Mars with those shapes and surfaces.

I think this is my lover. I think I see her here. I see her here in the same way in which I see her in a photograph that she made for me in the year 2021. I see her here in the same way, and in no other.

Amedeo really loved her, but he did wrong. The troubadours knew that, unlike the many loves which you can show with your body, the only love which you can make present as art is the amour de lonh. This Amedeo did not know.

There is an enormous history of painters who painted their loves and cloaked her in blue. I do not know this history. All I have heard are the rumors that Salai posed for Leonardo and became the Baptist.

And I know that I suspect Antonello da Messina of the same.

This is amour de lonh. Make her present, but make her present at the greatest distance conceivable. None is as high above me as the Blessed Virgin, and my lover's height above me feels like this height. So paint her as the Madonna. Or paint her as an angel.

To love an angel becomes now all too real, and only now is felt the immolation that love is, the loss of self.

II

There is something formidable in the mere premise of the having and the displaying of a painting like this, a painting of this size, a painting with a nude form, male or female, roughly on the scale of life. Certain ones would balk at this mere premise, and among them are my parents. Half a foot in the water and the whole sensory apparatus of the skin shimmers into awareness, and someone in a room on a wall of which hangs this painting feels the presence of a body, whether that body is in this world or in any world within it.

When I see the nude female form in art, I think that it is not distasteful to me for several reasons, but that foremost among them in effectiveness is the fact that I see in it an abstract image of my lover. I recognize in it a commonality, a distillate, between the material representation before my eyes and the body that I love because it is the only way I can see and touch and know my lover.

When I saw Modigliani's boy in short pants, I obtained an objective-correlative for the roughly thirteen-year-old remembered narrator of Gerald Murnane's Inland, the one with the short pants and the autistic (at least thus presented) interest in "girl-women," the one who would grow into a writer writing to a reader and sending that reader red herrings and diversions and coups de semonce and blagueries, taking the form, for example, of an writer-visitor-interlocutor's question, "'One thing I've always been a little curious about,' said the writer, tapping his glass idly with a fingernail and trying to appear somewhat bored by his subject. 'You chaps in your manor-houses out here on the Great Alfold…do you handle your young heifers when they come of age? pinch their flanks? squeeze their pointed udders? stretch their little breeding-parts for them?'"

This creation myth, this foundational conflict-site of grassland existence, this site returned to endlessly, Larry McMurtry and those who experience vertigo when they ponder chimerae. All along the length of the Silk Road fertility concepts do not go unscaffolded with animal figuration.

Most pointed, to me, among these figures, is that of the goat, the goat who will be separated from the sheep, the goat who (along with the goat-man) is indissociable from the word "lechery," that word which attaches itself to "lust" to confirm that, even italicized, "lust" cannot serve the purpose to which I have appointed it. These approximately interchangeable words, with all the weight in the world slipping through the cracks at the moment of approximation. "Lascivious" likewise. "Old English lust "desire, appetite; inclination, pleasure; sensuous appetite," from Proto-Germanic *lustuz (source also of Old Saxon, Old Frisian, Dutch lust, German Lust, Old Norse lyst, Gothic lustus "pleasure, desire, lust"), abstract noun from PIE *las- "to be eager, wanton, or unruly" (source also of Latin lascivus "wanton, playful, lustful;" see lascivious). / In Middle English, "any source of pleasure or delight," also "an appetite," also "a liking for a person," also "fertility" (of soil). Specific and pejorative sense of "sinful sexual desire, degrading animal passion" (now the main meaning) developed in late Old English from the word's use in Bible translations (such as lusts of the flesh to render Latin concupiscentia carnis in I John ii:16); the cognate words in other Germanic languages tend to mean simply "pleasure."'"

To arrange words among their neighbors and relatives renders palpable and proximate other things of which the mind can then sense the contours: the distillates of comparison. Gather enough neighbors and relatives and one almost imagines that there is such a distillate, removed from the original objective-correlative by any number of degrees, which corresponds to that which wants to be said, that for which there is no word.

So when I write lust I mean something abstract, only that which it has in common with love and with caffeine and with desire. I mean something far more specific than this, of course, but this first degree of comparison-distillation is as clear an alchemical formula as I can render.

Why does Fragonard find his way to a webpage bearing data, like that culled above, for the word "lechery," and to another webpage for the word "lascivious"?

At Stanford University I was caused to read two essays. One tried to make of Titian's Venus of Urbino an objective-correlative that could delineate once and for all the border between beauty

and pornography. (This attempt was, obviously, unsuccessful, and I felt that the writer should have been ashamed of his work, and I felt surprised that I had been caused to read it.) Another made a case, in terms I'd like to recuperate, for the height of acuteness in the methods employed by Boucher to crystallize eroticism in paint; as I recall, the matter rested most of all in a very certain pivot or tipping-up of the hips, called, perhaps, "unnatural," maybe "voyeuristic," described, maybe, as a bending of the rules of mise-en-scène to afford a view of a very certain region of the back of a girl or woman that would not otherwise have been possible.
The time of Boucher still exists for me on a plane of a certain rarefied abstraction. It is, because of a lifelong aversion, set apart from me at a very specific remove. It is, in part because of this, available on a plane where abstraction can play out uninhibited by its most familiar obstacles.

There is a weight which the sculpted bodies on the "loggia" exert on the lighter beings below them. I can feel them, as though heavy, as though above me. If I feel them, this feeling is contingent upon a projection into habitable points-of-view ("nymphs"), I think.
Why has the one immersed caught a fish?
There is in the painted anatomy of this time a quality of absent structure, something liquefied in its place, perhaps liquefied at the same hands which tilted the odalisque's hips. I would not reduce this quality to "body horror," but it is proximate thereunto.

There is a point at which this distancing of representational specificity approaches a plane, a rarefied plane, whereupon there is no longer a body, only rosy nipples placed on a jellied cloud; no longer a shepherdess's face, only the flush for which it had been but a pretext.

The paint becomes most materialized, most present-as-itself, least representational, when the arc toward this plane reaches its apogee.

At this apogee, the objective-correlative, the dispositif, reveals itself as the formalism that it is. A formalism on the register of the troubadours' formalism, their amour de lonh. Only in this abstract register can love become art. And become it must.

12 January 2025

I tense up and concentrate on preventing the extrusion of tears when Bella's smiling voice wishes me wellsleeping, because in that instant I realize that she will have to work this morning, in that instant because she has made no mention of this all the time that we have been talking on the phone, and I tense up, but I try to prevent real tears because I have cried about this too many times already.

Nobody should have to do this kind of work. Nobody.

I tense up and concentrate on preventing the extrusion of tears when my mother hurries out the front door in her black felt coat. At the thought of her arranging her hair for work and performing her makeup ritual in the pitch-dark hours before dawn is in any sensible way a possibility or a promise, I tense up and concentrate on preventing the extrusion of tears.

20 January 2025

On my drive back to L.A. at the end of last week I voice-noted the following:

I've been listening for a while to Michael Baumgartner's essay on film sound in Godard's Prénom: Carmen, and something in it just clicked with me, and that was: I realized that every time Godard refers to "hands," that stands in for something from which actual hands are more or less often indistinguishable, but which, I guess, generalizes or extends beyond that. So, the traditional (actual anatomical) meaning of hands shows us exactly what he means, but you could just as easily imagine feet or whatever other bodily organ of manipulation*-of-the-world [* I also wouldn't use that word] standing in for the hands.
(By the way, I still don't know what the importance of the two hands is, which constitutes the essay's title.)

Even before I clued into that, I was thinking for a long time about something in the press release that Luke Herrigel made for Eyrie Alzate, where he talks about technical apparatus, and says (besides what he says about the role of the technical apparatus in Alzate's work) something that I interpreted as his acknowledgement of this condition of art-making: That it's always situated, and that, if you understand that in its fullness, then you have what I've always been seeking with the line of thought that I've put under the title of espresso cup. (When I say "understand" here, I mean something a little bit like the operation that Heidegger undertakes when he seeks to understand Dasein, by which I mean to say that there's enormous weight put on the methodology, how you choose to draw your line into the understanding.

I was wondering, in passing, whether there's a relation between the two concepts of penser avec les mains and caméra stylo, the latter of which I haven't talked about in a long time but was of great interest to me roughly three years ago and at that time it had a particular interest to me that I think I still remember that didn't necessarily have everything to do with the way it was defined in the Cahiers du cinéma or wherever it was first coined. Penser avec les mains Godard gets from Denis de Rougemont, associate of Blanchot in the milieu known as the "nonconformists" of the 1930s, and also, I think, the author of Love in the Western World, if I remember correctly. So I'd like to read "Penser avec les mains" (text here) at the same time in which I revisit this Baumgartner essay in print.

Completely unrelated to the above except to "revisiting in print": Everything I was reading in Proust on this drive, thanks, of course, to my caffeination state at the time, was seeming so noteworthy: the whole area where he's talking about Bloch, and everything from there to where he's talking with the curé about the artist painting the windows, I'd like to glance back over in English print.

More notes that I don't think I'll forget but just to make sure:

I want to review parts of Prénom: Carmen tonight to remember or to make more rich and more material the things that are in my head right now reading this; and I also want to look at it again with the eyes of somebody thinking about what I sent to Bella under the title "Lover," with an eye toward extending that and, toward that end, remembering something specific about that movie from my first watching of it.

Also a reminder to then finish watching La belle noiseuse, maybe with an eye toward the same thing, but also as a first step down the road of seeing what Luke Herrigel was talking about in there, because I don't really know anything about what makes Rivette distinct. Long list of movies now.

An idea to make a painting of a very tight cropping of an image that Bella took for me in 2021, and paint it in a somewhat iridescent manner, and that this would be one of two material parts of my Christmas gift to Bella, as absurdly belated as it is, and this is special because it shores up, I think, a doubt that she has intermittently. I think I can do all the actual work of it while she gets her hair done and then hide it under a large cardboard box until it's dry.

The second of the two material parts would be to translate all of the ways of seeing (maybe technical-apparatus-mediated ways of seeing) that were so exciting to me in the circle of artists around Eyrie Alzate, and bring all of those to bear upon a view of our current apartment.

The third part of the gift is not material, but--and this may be ridiculous and self-serving, but--Bella has long told me that it would make her happy if I got to working on this type of thing

(painting) again.

It was brought to my attention by Valerie Steele (whose book I need to seek out for, most of all, its conversation with Ann Demeulemeester, who, it seems, has echoed what I was caused to write when I read about Alexander Shulan's clothing) that Baudelaire, in connection with his elaboration of the character of the dandy, may have said something that aligns precisely with the real intention or hope behind my interest in allure which I've connected with Rohmerian notions of aristocracy: Namely, that aestheticization makes possible a new aristocracy, which has nothing to do with inherited hegemony (that last statement may not be completely precise).

L'insoutenable légèreté de l'être is graced with two covers which make the insides of my mind turn, and one which strangely blends the other two.

I still haven't finished the movie, and I've only read a dozen or two pages of the book (the French translation; it just seems right, because I first learned of Kundera because of what he said about L'étranger, which I was researching just to have something to research in French, for my class. I need to recuperate the source I found.* [* It was Le rideau, Gallimard, 2005, and I quoted from it "Il se comportait mal dans les salons (au sens propre ou figuré); il était vulgaire" (68-69)]).

In the movie, I loved at least three or four things.

One was the very légèreté which is the only grounds on which it really could have succeeded or failed. It succeeded. (Here I mean, among others, that around which Roger Ebert's review danced; I felt I had to read this before watching, because of how bad adaptations of novels can sometimes be. "By this point in the movie, a curious thing had happened to me, as a viewer. I had begun to appreciate some of the life rhythms of the characters. Most films move so quickly and are so dependent on plot that they are about events, not lives. "The Unbearable Lightness of Being" carries the feeling of deep nostalgia, of a time no longer present, when these people did these things and hoped for happiness, and were caught up in events beyond their control. / Kaufman achieves this effect almost without seeming to try. At first his film seems to be almost exclusively about sex, but then we notice in countless individual shots and camera decisions that he does not allow his camera to become a voyeur. There is a lot of nudity in the film but no pornographic documentary quality; the camera does not linger, or move for the best view, or relish the spectacle of nudity. The result is some of the most poignant, almost sad, sex scenes I have ever seen – sensuous, yes, but bittersweet," etc.])

Another was the way these people live, in their Prague apartments with windows like those of a sunroom, in their spa town with Anna Karenina, or briefly in a Swiss city. It is of course the silliest error, but it is also my favorite one, to abstract the atmosphere of a scene or sequence of a film and take it as a proposition about how life might be lived. One may as well look to fashion advertisements for advice. I choose to do this. [Note: I made this last note before locating and pasting the Ebert section on the légèreté itself, Kundera-Kaufman's highly specific realization of eroticism in this film. Incidentally, in that very section, Ebert glancingly mentions the very

quality I had just recollected on my own terms. It of course cannot be ruled out that it may have been Ebert's priming that caused me to internalize this quality, and then, more than a month later, to recollect it this morning just before revisiting the critic's words.]

On the 18th page of the Gallimard edition (the one whose cover I paste first below), a chapter ends, "Tomas ne comprenait pas alors que les métaphores sont une chose dangereuse. On ne badine pas avec les métaphores. L'amour peut naître d'une seule métaphore." (This is easy enough to say as a throwaway line, but it does mean something here, at the end of a couple of steps of a writerly maneuver around Moses in his basket in the reeds.) Perhaps I will learn of such metaphors when I read de Rougemont's L'Amour et l'Occident.

A page earlier, I'd had a memory of some of the first nights with Bella--not the very first, the ones on Mission Beach. "Pourtant, cette fois-ci, il s'endormit près d'elle. Au matin, quand il se réveilla, il constata que Tereza qui dormait encore lui tenait la main. S'étaient-ils tenus comme ça par la main toute la nuit ? Ça lui semblait difficilement croyable." Sleep had a particular quality then. I do not regret the evolution of daily life, but sleep has never had that quality since. We lived in a particular way. I can hardly represent it.

Yesterday, I copied with Bella's gift from Jody of a Kaweco Sport, by way of handwriting practice, the two pieces of the scénario of 2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle which I typed by hand upon locating it within a volume in the upper reaches of the 70s-built wing of Cecil H. Green Library. I do think something is specified (unlocked by means of Correspondances-abstraction) when they are brought into contact with this passage from L'insoutenable légèreté de l'être: "On ne peut jamais savoir ce qu'il faut vouloir car on n'a qu'une vie et on ne peut ni la comparer à des vies antérieures ni la rectifier dans des vies ultérieures. / Vaut-il mieux être avec Tereza ou rester seul ? / Il n'existe aucun moyen de vérifier quelle décision est la bonne car il n'existe aucune comparaison. Tout est vécu tout de suite pour la première fois et sans préparation. / Comme si un acteur entrait en scène sans avoir jamais répété. Mais que peut valoir la vic, si la première répétition de la vie est déjà la vie même ? C'est ce qui fait que la vie ressemble toujours à une esquisse. Mais même « esquisse » n'est pas le mot juste, car une esquisse est toujours l'ébauche de quelque chose, la préparation d'un tableau, tandis que l'esquisse qu'est notre vie n'est l'esquisse de rien, une ébauche sans tableau. / Tomas se répète le proverbe allemand : einmal ist keinmal, une fois ne compte pas, une fois c'est jamais. Ne pouvoir vivre qu'une vie, c'est comme ne pas vivre du tout" (15).

Karina, in voiceover: "[(while Juliette and her "semblable" sip Coca-cola while looking at Lui magazine, and then there are the galactic ultra-closeups of coffee cups with bubbles swirling, and an ear):] Voici comment Juliette, à 15 h 37, voyait remuer les pages de cet objet que, dans le langage journalistique, on nomme une revue. Et voilà comment, environ cent cinquante images plus loin, une autre jeune femme, sa semblable, sa sœur, voyait le même objet. Où est donc la vérité? De face ou de profil? Et d'abord, un objet, qu'est-ce que c'est? Peut-être qu'un objet est ce qui permet de relier, de passer d'un sujet à l'autre, donc de vivre en société, d'être ensemble. Mais alors, puisque la relation sociale est toujours ambiguë, puisque ma pensée divise autant qu'elle unit, puisque ma parole rapproche par ce qu'elle exprime et isole par ce qu'elle tait, puisqu'un immense fossé sépare la certitude subjective que j'ai de moi-même et la vérité objective que je suis pour les autres, puisque je n'arrête pas de me trouver coupable alors que je me sens innocent, puisque chaque événement transforme ma vie quotidienne, puisque j'échoue sans cesse à communiquer--je veux dire à comprendre, à aimer, à me faire aimer--et que chaque échec me fait éprouver ma solitude, puisque … puisque …puisque je ne peux pas m'arracher à

l’objectivité que m’écrase ni à la subjectivité qui m’exile, puisqu’il ne m’est pas permis ni de m’élever jusqu’à l’être, ni de tomber dans le néant, il faut que j’écoute, il faut que je regarde autour de moi plus que jamais le monde, mon semblable, mon frère. Le monde seul aujourd’hui, où les révolutions sont impossibles, où des guerres sanglantes le menacent, le capitalisme n’est plus très sûr de ses droits et la classe ouvrière en recul, où le progrès … où les progrès foudroyants de la science donnent aux siècles futures une présence obsédante, où l’avenir est plus présent que le présent, où les lointaines galaxies sont à ma porte: mon semblable, mon frère. Où commence? Mais où commence quoi? Dieu créa les cieux et la terre, bien sûr. Mais c’est un peu lâche et facile. On doit pouvoir dire mieux, dire que les limites du langage sont celles du monde, que les limites de mon langage sont celles de mon monde. Et qu’en parlant, je limite le monde, je le termine. Et que la mort, un jour logique et mystérieux, viendra abolir cette limite et qu’il n’y aura ni question, ni réponse; tout sera flou. Mais si par hasard les choses redeviennent nettes, ce ne peut être qu’avec l’apparition de la conscience. Ensuite, tout s’enchaîne. Je ne sais pas où, ni quand. Je me souviens seulement que c’est arrivé. C’est un sentiment que j’ai recherché toute la journée. Il y avait l’odeur des arbres. Que j’étais le monde. Et que le monde était moi. Le paysage, c’est comme un visage. [... (while gas is being pumped):] Les objets morts sont toujours vivants. Les personnes vivantes sont souvent déjà mortes. Je ne fais rien d’autre que chercher des raisons de vivre heureux. Et si, maintenant, je pousse plus loin l’analyse, je trouve qu’il y a simplement une raison de vivre parce qu’il y a d’abord le souvenir et, ensuite, le présent et la faculté de s’y arrêter pour en jouir--c’est-à-dire justement d’avoir attrapé au passage une raison de vivre et de l’avoir gardée quelques secondes après qu’elle vienne d’être découverte au milieu des circonstances uniques qui l’entourent. La naissance au monde humain des choses les plus simples, leur prise de possession par l’esprit de l’homme, un monde nouveau où les hommes à la fois et les choses connaîtront des rapports harmonieux: voilà mon but. Il est finalement autant politique que poétique. Et il explique, en tout cas, la rage de l’expression. De qui? De moi: écrivain et peintre. Il est 16 h 45. Fallait-il parler de Juliette ou des feuillages? Puisqu’il est impossible, de toute façon, de faire vraiment les deux ensemble, disons que tous les deux tremblaient doucement en ce début de fin d’après-midi d’octobre.”
I was saying:
A form that resembles a ball of yarn and that may be generated with a gyroscope, perhaps:

A Picasso nature morte which feels, in some difficult to enunciate way, adaequate:

What I have called their “blend”:

Still having yet to read de Rougemont's magnum opus (that on whose subject I have new cause to doubt his expertise, now learning of his divorce), I am enchanted by two earlier writings of his.

In insisting on the finding of a place for that which never fails to bring me to tears, I specify my artistic project. I render it distinct from nearly all others. (Incidentally, I make Proust and Mitsou indispensable; etc.) But perhaps I also determine that something like de Rougemont's Le Paysan du Danube becomes indispensable to me, on these grounds: "[Les textes qui composent ce volume] se veulent une « contribution à l'archéologie des états d'âme » découverts dans le prisme d'une géographie mystérieuse et sentimentale, et sont autant d'évocations et de descriptions d'un monde en disparition, d'observations minutieuses, de médiations sentimentales et de charmantes divagations que le récit de ses aventures nocturnes ou de rencontres étranges où l'auteur pressent des questions essentielles qui viennent briser quelques certitudes de jeunesse."

The other is what is perhaps the same author's first-published work, named by Wikipedia « Henry de Montherlant et la morale du football » and dated 1923, but named by Rougemont 2.0 "M. de Montherlant, le sport et les jésuites" and dated 1924. In this differentiation of two points-of-view, I'm nearer to de Rougemont than to de Montherlant, even if I don't align with the former precisely everywhere. But the stuff of this piece is that for which it is of unmatched value to me. "Il me semble bien paradoxal de vouloir unir dans une même philosophie la morale jésuite, faite de règles et de contraintes imposées dans le but de restreindre la liberté et l'initiative individuelles, et la morale des sports anglais, morale qui veut former des hommes maîtres d'eux-mêmes, c'est-à-dire libres. Et cela me semble d'autant plus paradoxal que M. de Montherlant est justement un des premiers Français qui ait compris que le but du sport n'est pas la performance, mais le style et la méthode, c'est-à-dire la formation du caractère, en définitive." And "C'est donc à un lacédémonisme renouvelé que nous conduirait cette « éthique du sport » tempérée de raison. Ce qu'on en peut retenir, c'est la méthode." And "Et voici, ô paradoxe, qu'il rejoint Kant, Kant qui écrit : « C'est sur des maximes, non sur la discipline, qu'il faut fonder la conduite des jeunes gens : celle-ci empêche les abus, mais celles-là forment l'esprit. » M. de Montherlant illustre sa propre pensée de cette citation d'un dominicain : « Formez des jeunes filles assez fortes pour pouvoir tout lire, et il n'y aura plus besoin de roman catholique. » / C'est ce qu'on pourrait appeler une « morale constructive » : porter l'effort sur ce qui doit être, et ce qui ne doit pas être tombera de soi-même. Ainsi l'athlète à l'entraînement ne s'épuise-t-il pas à combattre certaines faiblesses : il développe ses qualités, le reste s'arrange de soi-même."

Quite separately, but on the same above-mentioned grounds of my "insisting on the finding of a place for that which never fails to bring me to tears," perhaps I also determine that Wuthering Heights and Manfred and every adaptation of Dracula become indispensable to me; this is a late project of mine, to figure out how and to what end. I've so far watched the two older versions of Nosferatu, and read Otranto, finishing it last night.

On Nosferatu, my thinking is yet fractional, but I may as well paste here notes I've made in other receptacles. 1922: "I was ready to try to watch this movie for an appreciation of its innovation and influence, putting on a thick pair of period goggles. It turns out I didn't have to. The means by which Murnau infuses these images with magic turn out to be timeless. And in the final intertitle, it graduates (for me) from excellent horror film to formidable artwork: '… and the truth bore witness to the miracle: at that very moment, the Great Death came to an end, and the shadow of the deathbird was gone ... as if obliterated be the triumphant rays of the living sun.'" 1979: "I watched this the same day I watched the original, and I was immediately taken by the idea that Herzog was achieving the same horror affect (affect, that inscrutable mist-object) that Murnau all but invented, and doing it with poetically opposite means. Where Murnau pioneered fade-ins and faded-outs to dematerialize the villain, intercut montages to miraculously bind a ship to a carriage in a neck-and-neck race, and photonegatives to film white trees against black sky, Herzog confined himself to a certain shadow-and-makeup-only filmic naturalism: just patience for the perfect Transylvanian (actually Czech) weather conditions, true-to-life Romani peasant architecture and dress, and unforgettable sense and manners from Adjani, Ganz, and Kinski. All this until, with about fifteen minutes to go, Herzog the writer departs from an at times shotwise faith to the original, and he and his trio forge their own immortal symbol-acts in the final scenes."

On Otranto, my primary thoughts are two in number.
Most overwhelming is the exemplary discipline with which Walpole makes Terror sustain the work's every movement, from first word to last: Terror being, by a certain oft-repeated specification of its distinction from horror, fundamentally a relation to that which comes. If this is traceable to some author, it is to Ann Radcliffe, perhaps in her "On the Supernatural in Poetry." She looks to Shakespeare, Milton and Burke to elevate Terror to the status of conduit of the Sublime, whereas horror's action is, in this respect, opposite. It must be footnoted that Freud and Bataille may differ here, and elevate Horror instead; as ever, one always knows one is in the right place with the Romantics, at the price of knowing whether one is pointed in the right direction. Second is Otranto's compaction; not perfect, having identifiable faults, but still in this regard excellent--in the regard, that is, that makes it measure itself alongside Le Samouraï, and only by a small margin to fall short.

All this in quest of that which gave Balthus an indelible taste for English literature centered tightly on Wuthering Heights--that which, that is, binds the fundamental alchemy of art to the play of affect-susceptibility. There cannot be the former without active engagement of the latter, though the dynamic is fraught by the same paradox that haunts any representation of love.

I haven't done enough, nor ever will, to enshrine the life, the world-within-world, which my

mother gave to me when she sent me an Advent calendar filled with L'Occitane's smells. All one can do is point to Proust and shelve this project.

21 January 2025

Things pertaining to Lukas Quietzsch which I postponed reading.
With Anne Arlt and Philipp Simon, he was exhibited at L. Zelig under the title Leben mit Kunst. Compelling is the hanging, which overlaps the doorjambs and makes the paintings to exert a behavior-impinging force of a different species than paintings are wont, though this force is in precisely the same category of every force paintings exert; and also the table, evidently homemade or DIY-cast, and fossilizing miscellaneous relics, topped, also, with single-use glassware molded, perhaps by heat, into forms which seem to define their own new species, much as did Magnus and Lea's styrofoam-cast vases. (They don't look like they'd be my favorite paintings of Quietzsch, but he and Arlt both here affirm what I'd paradoxically name Baer-space, paradoxically because what that term would designate is non-reifiability.)
Leben mit Kunst: The premise is my "espresso cup," translated into German: And in its realization I read the operation I identified in St. Casimir's, but here performed on a flat rather than a small church.

A footnote here is a work by Philipp Simon which does with a corkscrew to a windowsill what Aaron Garber-Maikovska does with his hands to piles of commodities at Costco and what Michael Angelo Bala does to a room by wheeling his assemblage into it.

The same artist, with Max Ruf, at Lo Brutto Stahl, Paris, 2024, registers a consummately articulate materialization of what I used to call moiré (in the generalized sense), which may be what Deleuze generalizes the word rhythm to indicate. In only three images, even, it becomes clear:

At Schiefe Zähne, 2023, Simon speaks alone, and with fuller voice. DIESEL-ONLY is the title there. The effect in the first image below shows the range that actually underlies what previously I could only designate by pointing to the hanging of the 15 Orient exhibition of Mathis Collins. In all, strangely, the articulation is not as univocal, not as clear, as he achieved with Ruf. But, around the edges between the words, something comes through that reminds me of my apartment, my home, something about the way I've made my place that I like.

In 2014 Quietzsch was included in a group exhibition at Tobias Naehring in Leipzig, Painting, Poetry, Pottery; the same paintings which overlapped the doorjamb are there again, but when I see them this time, I read them as a cautionary tale of how Baer-space can give rise to paintings that are not good. The same exhibition showed Tomasz Kowalski painting very differently from how I came to know him. I like him this way better.

There were, on the windowsill there, these other forms which say something uncomfortable and touching about the place where gorgeously articulate sculptural line, mass-produced material, and the breathtaking violent commodification of the body find themselves hotly in contact. I can

find no trace of identification for them in the exhibition's documentation, however. Exoticizing and eroticizing, they toe a queasy line of stereotyped caricature, but it's not this alone which is most unsettling.

The former ensemble, it is clear, were fabricated by the firm Keramos, which was founded in 1919, in collaboration with a sculptor whose identity is not clear. It seemed for a moment that the latter may be from the hand of Paul Wunderlich, a sculptor of genius parallel to Lindner but compromised here and there by that which Dalí had in common with Geiger.

Quietzsch and Simon found themselves again side by side in a larger group under the title Interests at Schiefe Zähne in 2023. Simon's work is another recycling, but Quietzsch here hits the stride for which I know him, and I am just as moved by a painting like this today as I was more than a month ago.

More than a month ago I heard Omari Douglin speak to an interviewer from a university art program on the occasion of a two-person show with Quietzsch. Douglin voiced a growing interest in Oehlen and other German painters of like mind.

Quietzsch's stride: Maybe it was in 2020, at that same last-mentioned gallery, under the title "my thoughts are a combination of sex and the (deep) desire to kill myself," that he first stepped into that space and found it to be where he belonged.

Almost as remarkable is what Hannes Schmidt wrote on that exhibition's occasion. It all rings so perfectly, with the sole partial exception of the final paragraph, when painterly process is sensitized and attemptedly synthesized into the conjured subject. It doesn't quite work, but still I see how it could have.

Colossal Youth

"my thoughts are a combination of sex and the (deep) desire to kill myself"

Maybe feminism can crack the nuts of this everlasting dualism of sex and violence. Simultaneously this binarity is still the driving force of thousands of movie-plots as much as part of the constitution of countless adolescences. Interwoven with the feeling of being misunderstood it represents a me- against-the-world logic, that protects some other sentiments from external judgment.

In its fatalistic exaggeration both conditions mark two peaks of a diverse range of emotions whose nuances, in fear of damnation, get crumpled up and trashed into the basket. In confrontation with a late form of capitalism that is extremely hungry for your sentiments, there are a few more reasons not to show them honestly and therefore a couple less opportunities to actually come to terms with them.

Why expose your fucked up inner world to an even more fucked up surrounding? Not yet mentioned: a digital world that would love a reason to see you fall.

[I add that, perhaps still political (external) in origin yet less explicitly linked up to an account of "the world today" than this one here, but linkable because it, too, contained all the pathos possible in this constant and consummated breakdown at the peaks of sex and violence, was the Brando-Bertolucci-Schneider performance of Last Tango in Paris. The hallmark of this breakdown is always in some way the shutting out of, or death to, the world, most poetic in Tango in the scene where the dancers' world is hermetically cut off from Brando and Schneider's, untouchable by (or untouchable from within) Brando and Schneider's. Its solution, then, of course, is always going to have to be Love. Brando and Schneider were never to become, ultimately, capable. Quietzsch may be capable, in his uncreasing of some dismissed feelings; even better, I think, are Luke Herrigel's words for Eyrie Alzate when they saw with clear eyes how real art, her art, (something like) "comes from the same place as" (but really "is") love (or "friendship," if we must resort to today's vernacular, for now).]

The paintings by Lukas Quietzsch uncrease some dismissed feelings and start to work with those in an emphatic, maybe nostalgic way.

Doubtful about the brushstroke's representational possibilities in terms of a "true" gesture, Quietzsch erases the applied colors by washing them out, applying more, washing them out again. He drags these motifs through his painting, in which every gestural painterly impulse is taken back by a negation of it, until a patina of gestures and their withdrawal results in the picture.

Hannes Schmidt

Hannes Schmidt runs Schiefe Zähne, having previously worked as an artist and then gradually diverted his efforts to "off-site" curatorial projects. He spoke, to Daily Lazy, about these things, and mentioned that oftentimes the artists he works with have also run curatorial projects. Simon

and Quietzsch, for example, had one called Liszt. Shoshiro Matsubara had one called XYZ Collective.

Matsubara is an artist whose work I like because it does quite different things, in my eyes. This first one does something like that early Kowalski above (which is also, in the same way, like that Pipe exhibition by Jan Eustachy Wolski), but then he also stages realities like those of Rasoul Ashtary or the earliest exhibitions of Justin Caguiat, and finally this other thing, completely different, at Bel Ami.

(Maybe he also gets a little too indiscriminate at times, but by and large there is a redemptive specificity to his vision.)

But I am overwhelmed by an artist who showed at Liszt. His name is James Whittingham, and this work, from 2018, is undeniably gorgeous. Its unaccountably expanding space surpasses Sam Szafaran's efforts to conjure the same. This, among other things, is enabled by a precision in certain lines which express something disciplined in the maker. And then there is the homeliness--the packing tape or cling wrap frame--which, in conjunction with that specific grandeur that there is in the view, says better than I ever yet have what I have been trying to repeat for so long: That there is a revolutionary potential of art to redeem, to replace, the otherwise-ineradicable residuum of allure that "aristocracy" will always (otherwise) maintain.

This work was written about in Artforum in 2018, by Steven Warwick. If I take Warwick's word for it (only if), then a zooming-out view of more of this artist will reveal not more of what I love this for, but rather that "the artist invites viewers into a surreal fantasy land in which the dour and decadent, eldritch and jokey are placed side by side, subjecting tropes of authority and class to sardonic inquiry." Maybe Warwick gets him wrong, but if he doesn't, then our convergence was only incidental. My inquiry will never be able to be truly called "sardonic" in the last word.

But that aside, what I'm saying, both in what is to be seen here and in what Warwick says when what he's saying is just what is to be seen ("A pet plays with a ball of string in a room full

of knights in shining armour.is perhaps the most uncanny image of the three, with the titular creature—a vaguely feline cryptid with a feather tail—disarmingly carefree in the face of a threatening flank of guarded figures," "A banqueting table is laid with breakfast under a vaulted ceiling. (all works 2018) depicts coffee and croissants laid on an exaggerated medieval table. The palatial, church-like structure evokes a feeling of sanctuary, yet the recently extinguished candle accentuates the emptiness engulfing the room, as if a houseguest has outstayed their welcome and dines alone in spite of the spread. Gracefully descending a large staircase, the figure in A woman comes down the stairs.channels Gloria Swanson waiting for her close-up in Sunset Boulevard"), is overwhelmingly mine.

This is my "espresso cup," and in the above-shown way it becomes all that it is.

Whittingham also wrote a novella, Drones and Dresses, which is out of stock at "rile* books."

The above is a poster for a film, very short yet as beautiful as they come, and in fact having a much smaller, more condensed perhaps, beauty of the same kind as the two voiced-over sequences from 2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle which meant as much to me as they did. The filmmaker, Mauricio Guillén, came to my attention only because his website was put together by the same Fuchs Borst that did one for Liszt. "Where have all saints gone in the face of a turbulent political climate in which homogenization, through consumer society, presents a far worse form of fascism? Saint Paul's contemporary rehabilitation more than a sermon is a necessity." The epiphany here is Saint Paul's kind, which is also to say that it is Baudelaire's kind: It is a realization of the reason to live with joy that is Love, that is other people. It is likely, if not quite certain, that when Joyce found his epiphany, and that when Proust was transported too, that in theirs can be found this same one.

Quietzsch's "stride": Here, all these: What beautiful paintings.

I somewhat liked David Ostrowski's owls at Parliament, and likewise his hangers at Ramiken. Maybe it is all there. For some reason, maybe due to fatigue of the optic nerve and of the beautymind, I am on the fence.

In Brando's humor in Last Tango in Paris there is something vulgar in precisely the way that Bertolucci has in common with not just Pasolini but also Francis Bacon and, most strikingly of all, Deleuze.

I've been practicing my handwriting (with Bella's Kaweco pen, gift from Prof. Maxmin) really vaguely, in no particular direction. I want someday to write like them:

A Byron manuscript for Manfred

A letter of Horace Walpole

Huysmans for L’Oblat

Huysmans in a letter

Bonnard in a letter

Baudelaire in a letter

Mallarmé

Mallarmé

Mallarmé

Mathieu

Rousseau

Whence this illustration?

The Internet returns a connection to Albrecht Altdorfer; I can’t tell how, but indeed there’s something of his color and ornament.

What levity in such mass. And who else could have staged so Gothic (in the 18th-century sense: You feel that Poe was born from this German mist (what were des Esseintes's words?), some several stories above the son of man) a Nativity?

For Otranto I tried to delve my own hand into some of that murky water that intoxicated Walpole. The real edifice in Puglia offers nothing in this regard. But this portrait of an Aragonese Neapolitan (and named Alfonso! The fifth such) receives the ascension of a corridor floor, drawbridge-like, with such candor that I know he'd do the same to a portrayed man stepping out of his frame.

From Droz I've learned recently of a mildly obscure text, Le Printemps d'Yver:

https://www.droz.org/monde/biblio/YverJacques5e6f68d80c8dc1.84075496

It's available in good form on Gallica:

https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k4641n/f10.item

The publisher caught my eye with these words, especially the ones I italicize:

Le Printemps d'Yver, œuvre unique de Jacques Yver, fut publié une trentaine de fois de 1572 à 1600, traduit en anglais dès 1580, et réédité une seule fois, en 1841, par P. Lacroix. La présente édition redonne à ce grand texte son état originel avec les variantes et corrections nécessaires, en

même temps qu'elle restitue son auteur, mort à 24 ans peu avant la parution du Printemps. Sous Charles IX, pendant les guerres civiles, cinq jeunes gens se réunissent cinq jours dans un château poitevin autour d'une « dame », et racontent chacun une « histoire ». Décor, dialogues et récits assurent à l'entreprise romanesque un caractère plus homogène et complexe qu'il n'y paraît. Inspiré notamment par ce qu'ont écrit Ronsard et Belleau avant 1572, Yver lie étroitement prose et poèmes et invente une « belle langue » aux registres très variés, au service d'un ensemble savamment composé: il lui importait de livrer avec humour les doutes et les inquiétudes d'un jeune gentilhomme sur les hasards tragiques de l'amour, le suicide, l'amitié, la guerre, la géopolitique, préfigurant parfois Montaigne, son aîné. Par ses connaissances et ses goûts multiples, le Printemps contribue à créer une réflexion nouvelle sur les arts de représentation et les plaisirs de la musique et de la danse. Par ses intrigues et sa langue, l'œuvre sert durablement de modèle en France et en Angleterre.

I saw this painting used for a book cover and thought it to be a condensation of the stereotypical Venetian palette. I was wrong; it's Rosso Fiorentino.

Enamored with Cushion Works, and hopeful, a hope that situates itself on the tip of the tongue and the top of the heart, that through this new window I'll find what it is that Delacruz and Eyrie Alzate find in common and enshrine it forever.

This text was written by Cushion Works to compliment Rafael Delacruz: Xerox, on view from April 21 to June 8, 2024.
◒ ◒ ◒

Rafael Delacruz: Xerox
The Xerox Holdings Corporation was founded in the early 20th century as The Haloid Photographic Company. In the late 1950s, Haloid hired an academic to rename the company and the word "xerography" was born, a neologism that roughly translates to "dry writing" in Greek.

Haloid changed its name to Haloid Xerox and then to Xerox Corporation in 1961.
Xerox made unbelievable amounts of money, acquired several other businesses, and built a brand on aggressively marketing ideas of simplicity, productively, and efficiency. So successful, in fact, was the company, that the word "Xerox" transcended its copyright, and like other trademarked products, including Band-Aid, Kleenex, Velcro, and Sharpie, its name has fallen into what's called genericization: To Xerox is now to photocopy. Counterintuitively, this comes at a potentially catastrophic price for the company, who strongly objects to the proliferation of their trademark: If the courts determine that "Xerox" has indeed eclipsed other brand names that effectively perform the same task, their trademark evaporates. They have therefore embarked on a campaign to dissuade the public from using their name to describe the photocopy process, and the broader, non-proprietary noun and verb it describes.[i]
Rafael Delacruz titled his new exhibition, Xerox, after his broader process of thinking and making, but there's something resonant about this ludicrous and deeply American corporate charade. He's poking the bear, widening the generic lens—toying with the "original" and cruising the awkward turf between the intentional and the happenstance in a practice that employs a kind of xerox logic.
Delacruz is often drawing, photocopying drawings, and cutting photocopies together to make new drawings. There's a folder on his phone called "xerox dream" which holds these images, and it's a eclectic collection that might one day be a book—no originals and all originals. His process makes you wonder about what we call source material, and you get the sense that his mind is an active photocopy machine, imprinting influence and inspiration to generate new and unpredictable results.
Delacruz' new paintings are works within works; the interior sections are rendered separately from the larger painted "frames" and then carefully nested within. The smaller paintings are nearly drawings, and very intimate. The larger "frames" incorporate broader strokes and an engagement with the canvas as a texture and material. (All this despite the fact that he literally painted them without a center.) And while their content is largely abstract, all sorts of things are visible: sunflower, lightning bolt, DNA, necklace, rope, placemat, remote control, sidewalk, chili pepper, feet, shoes, pants, angel, smoke, firework, pretzel, camera. It's as if the outer painting is a thought bubble of the inner painting, a structural way to contain not only their physicality, but also their thinking. Or maybe it's the other way around, that the smaller paintings are the thoughts within the larger bubbles. Either way, one dreams the other.
The paintings hang on a tall wooden backdrop covered in gray canvas. Their functional and invisible trade show architecture is betrayed by irregularities in canvas color and the un-ironed ripples and folds in its surface. Trade shows are exhibition-esque engagements where companies showcase new products, where originals are irrelevant, and where the promise of making copies —the more the better—is often the big idea. For this installation, Delacruz dyed large pieces of drop cloth in black bean juice then hung them out to dry. As in past works, he was interested in using "natural" materials that are culturally loaded in rather innocuous ways to achieve unknown results. This show is not about beans. In fact, he didn't quite know what color he'd get, though he anticipated, well, black. That the drop cloths turned gray—generic but simultaneously idiosyncratic—mimics the ways in which Xeroxing changes colors, tones, and densities. As Delacruz says, "it's as if I took black beans and ran them through a xerox machine and copied their color over and over."
Xerox is a contingent technology, defined by sameness and chance, and black beans are just one

piece of the indefinite puzzle, a conceptually non-conceptual red herring that might have you believe this exhibition concerns cultural identity, appropriation, or even assimilation—things that Delacruz happens to be interested in.[ii]

The installation also includes two framed photographs by Seiichi Furuya, and a video-projected slideshow depicting each page of his bookxMémoires 1995 (Fotomuseum Winterthur, 1995). Delacruz is drawn to Furuya's photographs because they make him want to draw; the drawings in turn make him want to paint, and the paintings often make him want to do other things, like make films or build installations. Furuya's work sends him to the studio, which is maybe the highest compliment one artist can afford another.

Furuya was born in Japan and has been based in Graz, Austria, for several decades. Despite the fact that he's shown widely across Europe and published dozens of books, he's relatively unknown in the United States. Delacruz came upon Mémoires 1995 nearly 10 years ago and reached out to the artist directly; they've maintained an on-and-off correspondence ever since. [iii] There are two different covers of the book: One shows a boy sleeping and the other depicts a collection of pink/purple flowers shot against the sky from below. Both feel like record covers, and speak to how a broken narrative, personal and enigmatic, can be romantic, or animated via other means.

Furuya's photographs are diaristic—they depict things he's seen, some beautiful or revelatory, others plain or domestic. Delacruz is drawn to the anthropological, ambient, scrapbooking aesthetic, and the human poses Furuya is able to conjure or capture. The pictures live in Delacruz' head like saved image files.[iv] At some point along the xerox-logic timeline of perpetual creation, Delcruz imagined this show, which not only incorporates Furuya's pictures, but equates photocopy and painting—technologies that are too old and always new, dead and alive, impossibly present, generic and proprietary.

When Delacruz reported on his bean-based canvas dyeing, Furuya responded through the English translation software he uses:

"I also read with great interest your story about making painting paint from bean juice. This year, for the first time, I tried my hand at making my own adzuki bean paste or anko. It is a simple preparation, just boiling azuki beans and adding sugar at the end, but it is one of the essential sweets in Japan. As I got older, I started to miss the 'nostalgic taste' and challenged myself to make it myself! The result was a great success and reminded me of my childhood when I had a craving for sweets. In the process of making anko (red bean paste), the water in which the beans are boiled is discarded once, and I remembered that the water had an azuki color, which overlapped with your photos of beans in water."

Xeroxing goes both ways, back and forth in language, time, and procedure. Come to think of it, didn't I see one of these hulking machines buried in a painting within a painting?

[i] For more, see "Don't Say Velcro," published Sep 25, 2017: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRi8LptvFZY [ii] Curiously, a friend mentioned to him that the paintings were like beanies, the smaller works wearing the larger ones, as a hat. For a time, "Beanie" was the working title for the show. Like the fog, it burned off. [iii] The book was initially prohibitively expensive; he later found a copy at Moe's Books in Berkeley for 15 dollars. [iv] On exactly one occasion, Delacruz literally drew from a Furuya photograph. It was uncomfortable and disastrous, and he never attempted it again.

Checklist
Rafael Delacruz, Stutter, 2024
Oil and colored pencil on canvas
29.5 x 33.5 inches
Rafael Delacruz, Cardboard City, 2024
Oil on canvas
29.5 x 33.5 inches
Rafael Delacruz, Steel Sky, 2024
Oil and graphite on wood and canvas
29.5 x 33.5 inches
Rafael Delacruz, Beanie, 2024
Oil on canvas
29.5 x 33.5 inches
Seiichi Furuya, East Berlin, 1986
Inkjet print
16.5 x 23.4 inches
Seiichi Furuya, Tokyo, 1994
Inkjet print
11.7 in x 16.5 inches
Seiichi Furuya, memoires 95_1920 x1080.mp4, 2024
Digital projection
It made me look up Xerox (Haloid) ephemera, and I found this:

Headquarters in Rochester--what was it there, and I still need to splay what I extracted from that Kodak book in Half Price.

For some reason when I kept looking I found this:

It’s engraved on the top of this camera:

About which Canon's own Camera Museum writes: "The advertisement about "Kwanon," a prototype of the Japanese produced 35mm rangefinder camera was appeared in the Asahi Camera magazine. It was June 1934 and the ad was placed by Seiki-Kogaku Kenkyusho (Precision Optical Instruments Laboratory), the forerunner of Canon Inc. Seiki-Kogaku was started to develop the KWANON which was conceived by Goro Yoshida (1900-1993). Germany's Leica and Contax were already well-established makers of high-end 35mm cameras when Yoshida pursued his dream of the ideal Japan-made 35mm camera. / There were supposedly four variants of the Kwanon camera. However, none is thought to exist today. Yoshida was a believer in Kannon, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy. The name "Kwanon" came from this Goddess' name. The lens which came with the camera was named "Kasyapa" which came from Mahakashapa, a disciple of the Buddha."

Asahi turns out to translate to rising sun, which I never knew while loving the beer, with its karakuchi. That publication contains much, to be sure:

It is true what was said about "Mur à Naples (1782) du paysagiste anglais Thomas Jones," that it is dripping with presence:

(That's inside a book published by L'Atelier Contemporain, dont "PRÉSENTATION PAR L'AUTEUR [Pascal Dethurens]: L'Émerveillement est un ouvrage qui se propose d'étudier, dans la littérature et la peinture modernes, la notion de présence telle qu'elle s'énonce à travers la plupart des poétiques et des esthétiques du XIXe et du XXe siècles. D'innombrables œuvres et critiques en font état, mais aucune recherche synthétique n'a encore été menée à ce sujet : le travail s'imposait donc, comme la publication d'un livre sur le sujet. / Le projet consiste à interroger la notion de présence dans sa permanence et ses métamorphoses dans les plus grandes œuvres de la modernité. Yves Bonnefoy en a fait une pièce maîtresse de sa poésie ; mais Pessoa

aussi ; et encore Rilke. Giacometti s'est servi de la notion à maintes reprises ; Balthus aussi ; et Kandinsky. Tout sépare les mondes techniques et créatifs de ces poètes et de ces peintres, mais la notion, toujours centrale, permet de les lire ensemble. / La présence : le terme est employé par Lévinas au sujet d'Apollinaire, par Didi-Huberman à propos de Tapiès, par Dupin pour l'œuvre de Miro. Peu de notions réussissent à réunir autant qu'elle un nombre si important de créateurs et de penser ce qu'ils engagent de leur rapport à l'être. / Qu'est-ce qui se dit en effet de l'être, de l'être-là, de l'être au monde, quand par exemple Butor dit des toiles de Rothko qu'elles sont des mises en scène de la présence ? Qu'est-ce qui prend valeur ontologique quand, pour prendre au autre exemple, Blanchot pense la question de la présence dans la poésie héritière du romantisme allemand ? Qu'est-ce encore qui se dit quand Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe parle de la présence dans l'expérience de l'extase en poésie ? / Trop de coïncidences empêchent de lire isolément tous ces énoncés théoriques et définitionnels. Trop de hasards se changent en faisceaux critiques et empêchent de se contenter d'une lecture monographique des poètes quand un si grand nombre d'entre eux (Séféris en Grèce, Ungaretti en Italie, W.B.Yeats en Irlande, Hofmannsthal en Autriche, etc.) s'approchent de la poésie comme lieu de la présence. / Car tous les plus grands – les plus grands poètes comme les plus grands peintres, Valéry, T.S. Eliot, Pavese, Celan, Ritsos, Lorca, mais aussi Van Gogh, Cézanne, Matisse, Chirico, Bonnard, Chagall — tous ont construit leur œuvre sur cette interrogation. Une synthèse est donc indispensable pour retrouver la logique de cette recherche fondatrice de la modernité et pour en examiner en profondeur les enjeux. / Ouvrage publié avec le concours de l'Université de Strasbourg.")

It hangs in London's National Gallery. And he could do it again:

21 January 2025

Now, I try to assemble just those traces I've preserved open this long, from which maybe I can reconstruct--but I know it won't work--the world that came to me as Kayemes. Eyrie Alzate, Lynn, Seasons, etc.

Having reread all the Alzate-Kayemes stuff (just what's around her exhibition there, Forces: the images, the press release, and Sean Tatol's deferential note), I'm struck mostly by two things.

First: I dream, of course, of sending precious redemptive (precious to myself, redemptive of myself) from my desk in front of my armoire to artists that I find online. Upon seeing the images

of the printer works again, I dream of sending Eyrie pictures of Bella's quirked-linocut variations of the interior of that Japanese restaurant in San Francisco. They share a quality, almost psychedelic but more immediate, just the coziness-openness of a space with that kind of familiarity. I also have a hunch that there's a fundamental commonality between the process of generation of these two respective types of works. But that is a question for Eyrie, and for Bella, hence this thought.

Second: Re-impressed by the condensation and clarity (the overwhelming sense of simplicity) in Luke Herrigel's press release, I couldn't resist again cutting up part of it and resplicing it. This time, just the first three strophes, but in reverse order, because I think, then, the way they could graft onto (or even subsume) all my own working becomes even more easily visible. "Things persevere, dimly, either pointlessly aware or shockingly ignorant of the simultaneous concussions of society, also in art. These methods are either subsumed in reflection or simply produce blinding glare." [So, in this arrangement, open with an account of "the world / today," and immediately attach to that a practicality-oriented description of the qualia of living in that world: There are these concussions; they make it impossible to avow either the course of persevering dimly, or that of ignoring; so it seems the options are either "[subsumption] in reflection or [production of] blinding glare"--but here I don't quite follow the correspondence of his terms. Next:] "Here we sit, spinning a web of our own productivity or not, in an age where everything must and cannot come to a halt. It feels honorable not to create. To not give. It has felt this way." [Yes; the first part of this is precisely what follows from the confrontation of the above-mentioned qualia. And the second part of this is a breathtakingly concise encapsulation of where I have been stuck for years: "feels honorable," or, I'd even sooner say, "feels there's no honorable alternative." But Herrigel turns this in a way that unsettles my inertia: "It has felt this way." And then, finally, in the beginning, all at once, the redemption:] "What's unresolveable in life is stiff. Love, what's tender, forms around this in embrace of this manifestly unanswerable, all important, all knowing, unknown. This is what life is for." [I indulge just one additional incorporation, from the original bottom, to augment the clarity of this view onto how love is the

salvation of the possibility of art today: “Eyrie’s work is the result of a long winded examination, striving towards the unity of effort and grace - the same steadfastness in an individual that friendship and love also stems from. This point of attention is not an answer or an original conclusion, but clarity in the fold of pursuit. Facing not its own self, but facing the unresolvable and stepping further.”]

A footnote: In his note, which basically consists of pointing to the press release, Tatol does make an incisive pronouncement that I’d do well to remember. Chiefly useful to me to retain is this characterization as “anachronistically earnest, maybe even idealistic, while harboring no illusions about that earnest idealism, which is crucial”: This is the most important fact hiding within what I’ve always acknowledged about all my projects with the adjective crackpotted. I requote, with a little extension on either side, just to preserve an additional observation, that this conjunction somehow becomes that which bestows the status of non-trite resemblance: “Eyrie's work, and Kayemes, is anachronistically earnest, maybe even idealistic, while harboring no illusions about that earnest idealism, which is crucial. Seeing the world for what it is without devolving into cynicism is about as easy as getting a camel through the eye of a needle, but if you're delusional or cynical then you've got nothing. The tinkered-with printer works look like bits and pieces from Vuillard without feeling trite (a nice payoff from the lack of delusion and cynicism) …”

Ok, I was just trying to reopen the curtains. Now the flood of givens, which of course cannot be reconstructed as it was, not least because the texture of the internet, the clicking of links and the searching was definitive of the initial angle of approach, but which nonetheless needs to be registered in here, if only in certain arrangement-ignorant details.

There is a webpage from 2022 on the site kaje.world which serves suitably to come first. (About kaje.world in may be said that “KAJE formed in the space between two artists’ studios as a dedication to the intermingling of attitudes, imaginations and artwork. In a climate where the majority of exhibition making is market-driven, KAJE is a place to suspend belief and develop experimental voices beyond the anxieties of that marketplace—specifically forms of investigation the market overlooks or deems unprofitable. Our mission is to support creative impulses that are difficult to define and in need of participatory testing grounds.”)

“an evening of performances by Celes, Kenji, and Natalia Panzer of Lynn, with Bug Bus Piano and wish. Lynn is an amorphous online record label, multiuser instagram page, and collective that was formed in 2017. It has since become a constellation of creative and interpersonal worlds exploring undefined, yet shared affinities. To extend the collaborative spirit the label has cultivated over the years, Late July welcomes the public to a rare in-person gathering of Lynn and its expansive network of associates and friends.”

“Celes (New York) celes11235.bandcamp.com soundcloud.com/celes11235
wish (New York) soundcloud.com/wish17
Kenji (Tokyo) supernalsofttouch.bandcamp.com soundcloud.com/user-943047036
Bug Bus Piano (New York) carriswheel.com bugbuspiano.bandcamp.com
Natalia Panzer (Kraków) ft. Marie López and J. Gordon Faylor (New York)npanzer.com
Lynn lynn.earth @lynnnnnnnnnnnnnnnn1
Eyrie Alzate lives and works in New York. Her name means “a large nest of a bird of prey, especially an eagle, typically built high in a tree or on a cliff."
Holiday Lim lives in New York. She co created and co runs Seasons Guide Co., Ltd, and is a member of Lynn, an amorphous online record label and creative collective.
Luke Herrigel is an artist based in Brooklyn NY. He recently opened the gallery Kayemes, also in Brooklyn.
Natalia Panzer lives in Kraków, Poland, where she regularly posts to her blog cirzpisława.
Bug Bus Piano Born 1991 in Seattle, Washington. Started making music in 2009 and began releasing under the name Bug Bus Piano via Psalmus Diuersae in 2013. Bug Bus Piano co-created and operates the website Carriswheel [dot] com. Bug Bus Piano makes music for lowly workers, people who are considered useless, and people who are made to feel hopeless.”

Clicking on Kenji’s link immediately leads me to Sex Magazine (No Adult Content) where I find the book I’m reading now (Let Me Try Again Matthew Davis), and this is great, but also there is Remilia Corp, which makes me sigh. The music, all over, seems great, though.

Natalia Panzer comes across ultimately neutral to me, but through her I found Health Gossip (her life in Kraków does enchant) and a fantastic song (“Shadows”) from the forthcoming album Greyhound Days by Patrick Shiroishi and Piotr Kurek, for which Panzer wrote liner notes.

From Bug Bus Piano’s carriswheel.com I found, one month ago, fun flags and drawings of birds that I texted to Sam Clay because they looked just like his would if he’d made them with a computer.
Lynn’s most recent action seems to be this page in Heavy Traffic; this image was taken by Lily Sperry, who is the abovementioned Health Gossip, via the abovementioned Sex Magazine.

From Sex Magazine also an individual called “Louis Vogue” (@lodewijkg), phonetically and etymologically almost too close to “Ludovic Nemo.” His life looks very similar to one that I imagine for myself, if a hair more Pinterested.

And also from Sex Magazine a resurfacing of “bod [包家巷],” who was a feature on a track I quite liked two months ago by “europa.” But he fires automatic weapons in a “story” video on Instagram.

A good number of these recognizabilities were seeded by my initial exhaustive link-clicking from Eyrie Alzate’s website (https://eyriealzate.com/).

I loved all the sounds I could hear in navigation from Lynn’s Soundcloud and bandcamp pages, and it made me excited and hopeful and it made me make my own profile on Soundcloud and it made me on 3 January 2025 write down a note which I referred back to today to complete my own bandcamp profile.

Especial among what I found from navigation from Lynn’s Soundcloud and bandcamp pages: “Since Last” by “Theodore & Natalia” posted somehow conjunctively by “se Dessaisir publishing” and “Theodore Cale Schafer”; etc.

The cover image for “Since Last” was done by “@j.amelie.cantrell,” apparently responsible at least in part for “se Dessaisir Publishing,” and who has a page which includes the following

images that I loved:

Automatically recommended by Soundcloud from something above are:
“nørd men jeg er gået rogue”

and “socialite2012”

and maybe the best listening of all was “for potential scenario 1.”

Theodore Cale Schafer has collaborated most recently with Sydney Spann, whose sound art distills the particular music that “care work” brings into voice. Her label, most recently, is

“Recital,” and I mention all of this to say that Recital is based in Glendale.

The excitement of proximity is also what made me latch onto a gallery I just learned about, “Soldes,” and what I found there made it seem surprising that I wasn’t aware of it before. A David Muenzer press release has a Blanchot epigraph, and this one includes Eyrie Alzate.

Alzate: I have to store the following links, in particular, to her art.

https://eyriealzate.com/deleted-almosteveryday-cds2024.pdf

https://eyriealzate.com/man's%20road%20postcards.pdf

https://eyriealzate.com/Rubicon.pdf

https://hill-cherry.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Text_But-looking-back-ah-never.pdf

“Calmeron” (“@calmreon”) is someone I found through the Instagram account of “Lynn.” He may have created this image, which I know from almost a year ago, from Blue Arrangements:

And he posted this image, which appeared to me beautiful in large part because of the nonlocalizability of each of the little images it arranges. They turn out to be fictional “brands” created for a game called “Splatoon.”

Other Kayemes exhibitions are also good.
Bonding paired Herrigel's own old photographs with sculptures by Zaid Milefchik. Milefchik's most recent exhibition was a group at Rumpelstiltskin in November, a group which also included Alzate.
Their last, Verstraeten and Guillot, overwhelmed me with the beauty of its poster.

The art made me feel an enormous sense of possibility--I may have already mentioned this, but it recentered kurrent in my head.

Then there is a Blogspot dedicated to the film and music happenings hosted by Kayemes. The last was a screening of Turn Left, Turn Right by "Wai Ka-fai, Johnnie To," organized by Seasons Guide.

I like the Instagram posts of Anabel Robinson ("@nanny__248") and even find them to be somewhat like mine. Likewise Sarah Wong ("@sarah.wong_"). If I am not mistaken, they together do Seasons Guide.

I hope these links, to Seasons Guide, never break, because they may be the most precious registrations of all these that I've devoted my whole day to collecting.

https://seasons-guide.ltd/stationery/brochure.pdf

https://seasons-guide.ltd/stationery/brochure2.pdf

I've saved them as "seasons guide brochure.pdf" and "seasons guide brochure2.pdf" just in case, in my folder "texts."

23 January 2025

From Thadée Klossowski de Rola's stylized memoir Vie rêvée I learned of a onetime dinner guest of his and Balthus's, Gaëtan Picon, whose book covers bespeak a whole allure node directly nextdoor to Nahmad's The Collector.

"Samedi 15 mai. - Diner Balthus aux Gobelins, chez les Gaëtan Picon, puis Castel (les jumeaux Tual, Marc Doelnitz avec Handa, jolie Suissesse que je croise tout le temps, qui m'attire beaucoup). Le petit matin des oiseaux."

Rafael Delacruz, Xerox, April - June 2024, at Cushion Works.

"... It's as if the outer painting is a thought bubble of the inner painting, a structural way to contain not only their physicality, but also their thinking. Or maybe it's the other way around, that the smaller paintings are the thoughts within the larger bubbles. Either way, one dreams the other."

I resisted this reflexively; it felt a bit trite. But maybe its literalness exempts it from that judgment, actually. If "one dreams the other" can be said of anything, here it is good.

"Delacruz came upon Mémoires 1995 nearly 10 years ago and reached out to the artist directly; they've maintained an on-and-off correspondence ever since.[iii] There are two different covers of the book: One shows a boy sleeping and the other depicts a collection of pink/purple flowers shot against the sky from below. Both feel like record covers, and speak to how a broken narrative, personal and enigmatic, can be romantic, or animated via other means."

The idea of the on-and-off correspondence, the envy. But really: Here is the most important thing enshrined in all this really good text: speak to how a broken narrative, personal and enigmatic, can be romantic, or animated via other means. This is better than what was incompletely fit into the term "re-haunting." This is more true to the Proustian, personal dimension of what I am to do.

"Furuya's photographs are diaristic—they depict things he's seen, some beautiful or revelatory, others plain or domestic. Delacruz is drawn to the anthropological, ambient, scrapbooking aesthetic, and the human poses Furuya is able to conjure or capture."

I think of Wolfgang Tillmans--not his whole character, but just that aspect which his SFMOMA exhibition revealed to me with such clarity, that same aspect that I later (on 29 April 2024) tried to re-encapsulate: "For last I've saved what might be most poignant because it, more than the others, suggests techniques (the very same techniques of molecular aestheticization, the kind of aestheticization that instantiates in one discrete _step_ or _instance_ with its own little glow around it, which can be repeated enough times to amount to a little fragile constellation of these glows that is enough at least to span its filaments across the screened surface of one life, or as much of one life as one needs to hold in one's head at any given juncture) that are _accessible_ to me, so poignantly accessible-appearing that this (paired with the obvious but always unstated fact that _it won't happen_) almost brings tears to me, brings me to tears because of how beautiful and how possible and yet my ability to _move into_ what even seems _most possible_ always proves me to be undeserving of ever having received my mother's love. / This is what I am talking about. The inkjetted sheets of unusually long almost rolls of paper from a printer that I could _have_ and operate cheaply and relate to as the kind of machine that acts on the real

world and makes noise and outputs and imprints (everything that a laptop and an iphone does not--_this_ tiny improvement itself seems enough to me), the clippings in jars of water, the way that the window has been made to appear, the texture, is the photograph analog?, and what finally triggered the actual pricking of my nose and the wettings of my corneae: What I read as (it may not even be this at all (in fact it is not--and this makes no difference)) a long, receipt-shaped (if slightly wider, hopefully just as thin but I guess with more tooth so that it can be written on with a Pilot G2 or a Sharpie Ultrafine) slip clipped to a window or to a clipping of leafy but clean (and humble, like a radish or something else pulled up from moist-ish soil) plant matter bringing life into the space in a way that is evidently not exclusively trademarked by Jonas Wood, or something: And on this sheet I imagine written a list of things, of _just_ the important things, a list of _just_ things that would be _enough_ if I could read them in the morning when I am suicidally in the grip of the strongest instant of the amnesiac push (which begins my every day, and which is matched at the other and by the equally suicidally strong a-cognitive pull: My mind never _works_, I am always being moved so swiftly by both this push and this pull, in the morning experiencing just the push and in the evening just the pull, like I'm being handed off from one (when I can't remember enough things to string together a thought) to the other (when I've finally done the excruciating rebuilding work of dragging enough things back into my mid-term memory to be sufficient ingredients for a thought, but no longer have enough electricity in my working (shortest-term) memory to actually execute this thought, whatever it might have been but never will have actually been) it feels damaged without trauma but somehow bluntly impaired enough to never again be capable of ever again really _thinking_, and I'll never know why, I almost laughed when yesterday I thought "long covid" but on the other hand it's not like there are any drugs it can be chalked up to)."

And I just reconjure all this to say: I think Furuya is this kind of artist.

I just think.

I dog-eared the name “Cecil Mary Leslie” several weeks ago. I cannot now figure out why, nor whether these images are owed to the same individual. Nevertheless:

These, the first of which is titled “Endymion,” are from the National Galleries of Scotland:

The name Jules Pascin first came to my attention the second time I read A Moveable Feast. (Not the first: I had a rather disturbing procrastinatory attitude toward painting at that time, in high school.) I was on an airplane this second time, and I might have dismissed him on grounds of character, or something, or pejorative effects of character discernable in the work. On looking now, his things look strange and full of life, and full of a strange life, too.

Perhaps a self-conscious repetition (the self-consciousness new and redemptive) of the saccharine blur of a Renoir.

The following are interlinked in a sort of line in my head: the Abbé Prévost's Manon Lescaut (Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux, et de Manon Lescaut); thence Faulkner's The Wild Palms [If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem], because of the flight-wandering in the Mississippi's environs; thence Varda's La Pointe Courte, because of her stated intention; but then, La Pointe Courte has company, according to the "Cultural allusions" section of the Wikipedia page for The Wild Palms:
Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges translated the complete novel into Spanish as Las palmeras salvajes (1940). The Wild Palms is quoted in Jean-Luc Godard's 1959 film, Breathless ("À bout de souffle"), when Patricia claims to prefer to take "grief rather than nothing"; the same quote is cited in the 1986 John Hughes comedy Ferris Bueller's Day Off, when Principal Rooney "consoles" Sloan while waiting in front of the school. It also appears in the movie Im Lauf der

Zeit, 1976, by Wim Wenders, in which one of the protagonists, a truckdriver, is reading his paperback copy of the book every now and then, and in the movie Perfect Days, 2023, also by Wim Wenders. Agnès Varda claimed in her film The Beaches of Agnès that the structure of Faulkner's novel directly inspired her first feature, La Pointe Courte. A copy of "The Wild Palms" appears on a bookshelf belonging to the protagonist in the 1999 movie "Ghost Dog."

Maybe I like Peter Wächtler, between Jochen Klein and someone else on the tip of my tongue:

Add, to the “Lover” thing I wrote, that which was really most pressing for me to say, re. formalisms and the Nancyean dynamic by which as soon as something becomes represented it is no longer love; I glancingly treated this, but I need to do it better; and I must not count on this phrasing here either, because that is not quite it either.

Then I need to make it so that there aren’t “references” and only after this can I print it out and tape it to the back of a small panel.

24 January 2025

Thought that I could send an “application” to “shower199sqm” with the following idea, explaining that I became aware of them because I recently became aware of the two people behind Seasons:

Send them my paintings, the ones I like; and the windows, and say that I’d use the ~$1300 USD primarily for shipping the windows, also maybe for the paint cost to cover them with oil paint in similar manner (explain, for example, the schema behind the Klimt garden that’s underway; say how Eyrie Alzate is my favorite artist currently, point to the crystalline little image of art I’ve gleaned from her refracted through Luke Herrigel’s brief writing, and say how the reason this quixotic gesture of mailing the wood panels and the glass windows would be worthwhile is on one level to show the gallant and endearing nature of reaching out over great distance with art, care, and the internet--(that which I have not done yet, so, crucially, this exhibition would be that gesture itself--)and then, on another level, consummating or “sealing” that, as it were, there is the fact that the painted glass will almost certainly shatter in transit, just like Duchamp’s “large glass.” Quote him; he loved that and said it perfected it (almost like a ritual officiation, or a stamp of finality, but in either case a ratification of the openness to happenstance, or whimsy or kismet or whatever you want to call it; just so, no matter what becomes of this gesture of adoring emulation (directed at you, and at the two people behind Seasons, and at Eyrie, and at Luke who brought that work to me via internet networks--in short, all whose material traces are the rabbit tracks that I followed the handful of steps to learn of this application), its product (painted with care and therefore glowing, even if shattered) will radiate that gesture’s warmth for ever-so-long as it shall exist.

28 January 2025

I had not begun a painting since late August, at my best guess (that Klimt one which I drew but never put paint to; I may be off by more than a month in my estimate), until this morning. This one, perhaps crucially, can absolutely never be shown to any eyes but Bella’s.

(Is that so? I think, while drawing this painting, and anticipating this painting, predominantly of Modigliani’s Nu couché; but there is also this pair of paintings, among Bernard’s latest, which is to say, from the hand of a Bernard among the most Catholic thereof.)

While driving to Los Angeles, more than a week into Bella's absence and well into the particular psychosis (a fact of my life, and not even entirely unwelcome; I do well to know it) that reliably ensues, often as early as the opening of my door upon return from the airport, I recorded my intention for this painting. "An idea to make a painting of a very tight cropping of an image that Bella took for me in 2021, and paint it in a somewhat iridescent manner, and that this would be one of two material parts of my Christmas gift to Bella, as absurdly belated as it is, and this is special because it shores up, I think, a doubt that she has intermittently. I think I can do all the actual work of it while she gets her hair done and then hide it under a large cardboard box until it's dry. The other part of the gift is not material, but--and this may be ridiculous and self-serving, but--Bella has long told me that it would make her happy if I got to working on this type of thing (painting) again."

It was hard, very hard, for me to draw it. I did not succeed in carrying its momentum--merely an hour or two of true work so far--into the mixing and laying down of slick plages of paint, to be applied in a manner closer to my fiddle leaf fig picture, and after that my portrait of Bella, than to anything else I've made. It was hard for me, very hard. It's anyone's guess, really, as to why. The feeling is something like resistance to the experience of engaging in a task which purports to be the one for which my entire being is cardinally suited, but for which I feel at every turn I do not have authority, or expertise, or, that which is worst of all, true interest in gaining that authority or expertise in this particular facet of craft. This feeling is universally translatable into the decision to paint differently.

What is different with this painting is that I am not allowing myself to translate that feeling into that decision. It is, alongside a song, Bella's Christmas gift (the two enshrine perhaps the most consequence-loaded time-pinpoints of desire from the histoire of our love; and, each is the object of some extensive prompting from her, to bring a guitar to Los Angeles and to paint again), and I've justified its month-and-change delay to myself with the fact that I did not end up with the solitary time on which I was to depend; now that Bella is in Chicago, the picture will be painted, and my feelings will be suffered in a posture that does not afford them contact with my executive function.

I did draw it, but then I walked for three hours rather than put paint over the silverpoint. Attention-deficient but aimless, and so I walked even while maintaining a single lingering thought that this walking I am doing is not what I should be doing. I blame the big cup of green tea I drank while drawing, just as I blamed yesterday's top-of-morning meltdown on the tea cup with which I opened my day. I drank each so as not to use, quite yet, my last coffee's worth of beans. I cannot, this time really cannot, afford to buy more.

This note has been written while I sit in my home alone, nearly naked, my large wine glass poured with my Dominican rum, ron añejo, which I sip into a stomach which has not received anything since breakfast but a couple of three-day-old donut fragments. It is a beautiful bottle, and Bella received it from a colleague, together with a Dominican cigar, at a ritual holidaytime exchange. I drink it for warmth, in place of undoing my nakedness, so as not to imbue a garment with the smell of my skin; the washing thereby necessitates would put me over a certain edge; in this, that possible action has company, company with almost all of the worlds' possibilities.

Shower

Huile d'amande

France: Paris: Passy and montparnasse: Has precisely as much to do with this as (has to do with this precisely insofar as--better, inasmuch as--no, I feel that there's a word that is alike to these two in all respects except that it exchanges extent for manner--the scene of the traversal of the threshold out of the building onto the sidewalk.
I rub almond oil into my wet body and I observe that my scrotum, filled with two small eggs alike to a robin's, protrudes, protrudes in manner not unlike that of the penis.
I rub almond oil into her wet body and I observe that (specific detail re. Fold or crease that is observable from the manner-of-looking of my drawing from that photograph).
Is the following an actionable concept? Is the following hypothetical realistic, realizable? Conceptualize beauty (quality, appealingness) of the penis today after the fashion of the ancient Greeks: An ideal which is rather small, near to the core, not hanging in any case, never obtruding; an ideal with which one could well and easily run, fast, and not just run but perform all manner of athletic feats whose measure and judgment may be taken by the wide and variegated array of contests (pl. of athlon?) devised by that socius across several centuries and augmented for many more centuries afterward, with relative peaks of interest in the tennis courts and rowing courses, perhaps, or volleyball pits and Brazilian jiu-jitsu mats, or Delon boxing rings?, of the 20th century (am I interested in anything notionally cutting-edge, in this department?).

To which I answer: Perhaps; but, if so, perhaps it is only actionable, realistic, realizable, with an added condition that a certain knowledge be first established: namely, that the member does grow, does grow long, and with some heft. If this fact be independently and preliminarily established, perhaps then an authentic apprehension of beauty may be undertaken, whose object is the male sex, well-affixed to, and well-integrated into, the front-underside of the male abdomen, penis short but not stubby, taut and "pert" (?), testicles snug within a scrotum that has both rotunditiy and control. All these words, uncouth, unwieldy, and unbidden, are no more than what is wordlessly recorded (i.e., just as specific, but to the present temperament admissible because nonverbal) in all those representations most laudable: [list them: Not just Michelangelo's David, though he'd be somewhere on the list; perhaps Donatello's even sooner; try others--try Botticelli's Mars, is there someone's Apollo?, and so forth.]

Consider this image, imaginary and rhetorical. Representations of our bodies, "our," produced by means of some photographic device; photographs, then; produced under circumstances of intoxication, circumstances under which the bodies would not necessarily do things (make shapes, make contacts) they otherwise wouldn't, but would, certainly, make shapes and contacts whose later-apperceived representations would be striking to the then-recently-but-no-longer intoxicated persons of said bodies in a certain manner in which they would not be striking without the playing of the important role allotted to the intoxication. The representations: The inherent beauty: Hers, knowing no equal, knowing no comparison; and mine, in the representation beautiful too (whether or not its questionably-reifiable component parts ring in certain manners on the non-quantifiable judgment apparati proper to each: Something in the character of the expanse from sternum to deltoid (long being the ideal, but long and flat, or something, in any case long in a very certain way); and in that relating shoulder-joint to neck; and in the relation (not just spatial distance but also density-traversed--and, at that, not just "density" but rather instead what, in addition to how much, matter is spanned per unit distance; "what," here, carrying as implicit ideal the vitality and purity and athleticism and spirit-richness of all the systems and subsystems of the viscera and everything interlinked therefrom and

thereto) between navel and small of back), strictly on her authority.

All this was to say, having the hypothetical scenario of those shapes and their representations fixed in the mind as such, how is the state of mind begotten by obsession ever unalike in kind to the sort of intoxication therein supposed? And so, therefore, it is that any putative representation of love, or, perhaps more precisely, the beauty perceived in the course of love (but even this admits a possibly-superfluous figure: Is "the beauty perceived in love," then, any truer a name?), is always a thing indistinguishable in character from the representations in the hypothetical; whence, my proposed injunction against any non-formalized (or, "unmediated"? I still do not have terms adequately specific here) art-as-love-love-as-art.

[A footnote added at 11:22 p.m., some hours later, having floated up to the roof to breathe the night air and such other things as arose to me, and to breathe into my phone the words of Cavalcanti's Canzone "Donna me prega," together with their translation into English: The following have a place in what I wrote for Bella and called, perhaps mistakenly, "Lover." The opening tercet is as close, perhaps, to an ars poetica as real art, love art, can have: "A lady asks me – I speak for that reason / Of an effect – that so often – is daring / And so haughty – he's called Amore." "I speak for that reason"--and everything thereupon follows. Soon, he avows that in which I can join him: He owns not that he [have] the talent to prove at will "whether a man can show him [Amore] to gazing." (This is the same question I asked last, above.) Pound found, in these next lines, everything, and I think that they, perhaps with Pound's aid, hold half the key, the other half of which is in the joint hand of Proust (and Rilke, Mallarmé, maybe, too): "In the place – that memory inhabits / He has his station – and takes on form / Like a veil of light – born of that shadow / Which is of Mars – that arrives and remains." (The last line and a half there often fall away, but who am I to pronounce now whether they can be allowed to.) I think the truth enshrined in these lines, which I have always known, troubles Bella when I must give it voice to her: "through feeling – not rationally, I say; / Beyond balance – yet proclaiming judgement, / That will itself – 'stead of reason – is valid." When above I said "shapes," much, much, is tacitly to be subsumed therein; among such, this line: "Contorting – the features – with signatures of fear." These lines contain all that which makes me resort to the term "mist" (in place of innumerable just-inferior substitutes): "Seen – as blankness fallen among objects; / Listening deep – yet seeing not form itself: / But led by what emanates from it. / Far from colour, of separate being, / Seated – in midst of darkness, skirting the light." Such is the insolubility of art, the stuff of its permanent "at-hand." In the last lines Cavalcanti signs the canzone with earned pride, but in the couplet preceding them, he puts to words that which is still of the immediate essence: Namely, the formalization necessary for any art that aspires to be love itself. "Canzone, confidently, now you may go / Wherever you please, I've adorned you so." The song, the painting, has to be crafted, and then it may be itself, epistolary prism. No other account of love, of art, of Communion among persons, rings true.]

I cannot help but feel some endearment toward my undertaking, nearing completion, to read Austerlitz aloud into various microphones. I have taken to titling the segments in such manner as "Austerlitz 162-174 (with Martini; see picture)" and "Austerlitz 268-288 (alone, while finishing

one third of a bottle of Barceló, Bella in Chicago).” I photographed, only once, the tools which I use in this occupation. It suits me like a glove, which is to say, precisely as perfectly as the task of la copie de textes suited Hantaï in 1958-59.

And I, too, have my occupation recorded in a discrete object. Mine records much; it records my larynx and its attendant muscles, of course, but also a revealing cross-section of my varying degrees of knowledge of the languages English, French, German, Dutch, Czech, and Welsh; it records my life, a perceptible texture of it lain like a sheet over some dozen-odd hours scanning these few months.

[I would like to attach this note to my recording, and in that way show it to other people.]

The range of pages in Austerlitz from no later than 275 through no earlier than 288 consists of an account of Mitterand’s Bibliothèque Nationale which mirrors, in almost unfathomable extent--which is not to say completely--, my own.

When I was there, I took these photographs.

The sentence in Austerlitz “If one looks down from the deck at the spreading gray-green crowns of the trees, some of which perhaps are still thinking of their home in Normandy, it is like looking across an uneven expanse of moorland, while from the reading room you can see only the blotched red trunks which, although fixed in place with steel hawsers rising at an oblique angle, sway slightly back and forth on stormy days like waterweed in an aquarium” (280-281) prompts me to paste the most imagination-conducive of all the jobs to which I have applied. (Which is not to say the most touching, or appealing; those are the Actuarial Trainee positions at Sompo International.)

“The Traver Lab uses zebrafish to understand the molecular and cellular bases of how blood stem cells are formed during development. The Research Associate will be responsible for managing the aquatics facility that houses our fish, which includes caring for adult animals as well as rearing embryo to adulthood. / This position has room for growth, as a new, state-of-the-art zebrafish facility to accommodate several research laboratories will be constructed over the next few years! / Working under direct supervision, the Research Associate II performs routine and increasingly complex laboratory tasks and procedures and develops technical expertise in one or more areas relevant to research projects. The Research Associate II will participate in research activities involving all aspects of the research process, to include, but not limited to; investigation, technical, testing/validation of results, and report findings. The Associate will perform a variety of routine experimental protocols and procedures to support the objectives of laboratory research projects. The Associate will observe and comply with safety standards and procedures, assist in preparation of data for publication and/or presentation at scholarly meetings, and assist in general laboratory maintenance. This position does not have supervisory responsibilities.”

I recounted this to Bella, smiling widely. I then had to go to great lengths to assure her that this sort of job--namely, one which does not capitalize upon my Mathematics degree--constitutes the minority of my enormous and rapidly growing mass of sent applications. She was skeptical for somewhat longer into these assurances than I would have expected.

How strange the look of my bed, how strange that of my slippers, those which I’ve lived in for more or less an extensive duration, leaving my imprint, as can be seen if one looks, but not leaving it in such a way as could be taken as framing the impression itself (not in such a way, that is, as could be taken as an overt image). The image, if sought, has thus a nakedness: Seen, it preserves and renders perceptible, too, its habit of being overlooked.

29 January 2025

Regarding the writing for Bella I just finished (calling it “Lover,” and still unsure) and the painting with it:

Art in private.

Nabokov’s letters to Vera, Kafka’s to Milena, even Joyce’s to Nora.

But what of Proust? Balthus, even? And Dante, for that matter? Is this art love itself, and how?

Only when this one painting can take its place in a kaleidoscopic view of all Love--all kinds--will I have done my painter’s work.

Perhaps Mallarmé’s occasional verse shows how to make the first step out of this locked room. But--perhaps--I will always have begun at art in private.

I’ve been having great difficulty trying to relax. The act of painting has much to do with it, but perhaps it’s also the eveningtide resurgence which tends to celebrate the twenty-four-hour anniversary of the commencement of drink. (I did in fact wake up with some additional resistance this morning.)

I’ve noted this elsewhere (in what I have named “Lover”), but Modigliani’s Nu couché has been persistently fixed in my mind while I’ve been occupied with the task of how to paint this image of Bella. I’ve already noted the parageometric (what better word is there?) quality of skin-surface that it triangulates with Botticelli’s most haptically luminous achievements; then there is also the question of palette, on which this painting plots a point that has something in common with the Gertrude Stein / Willem de Kooning primaries, while also having something of the richness of a Mallarmé, Valéry, Nijinsky sort of environment. Lastly, find those reds and blues in unexpected places: in the jaw, the lower forearm, the armpits (opposite each other), and the pubic hair. Paint, then, is thrown around--or, better, pushed and pulled around--in a way much more proper to pastes than to liquids. I am still trying to chew on these things.

I say all this to add that there are two other paintings which are similarly occupying me. Picasso's Belle hollandaise is one.

It shares that paste-intrinsic quality of pushing and pulling; here, though, the bichrome is different: pinks and blues chalkier than Boucher pastels.
The other I have yet to identify. It is either Picasso or Matisse, and it bears greater resemblance to the paintings made by the painter in Rivette's La Belle noiseuse than any painting by either painter I've flipped through in trying to pin it down. I am picturing the paintings in the Antibes museum, but also I am picturing the painter at La Californie and in the film Mystère Picasso. And for Matisse, I am picturing the two piano / music lesson paintings, but I am certain the subject is the female figure.
(A film critic took for obvious that the Piccoli character is Picasso in all matters fleshly, historic, personal, and œuvre, Frenhofer supplying, I suppose, just the scenario / plot; to me, this is not nearly simple.)
I have to mention the somewhat sublime experience of watching the painter work in La Belle noiseuse, specifically watching his pen or his brush move across his rough, treated surfaces, with the attendant scratching or buttery noises. The experience is more like letting him paint. It is thus, coming off my hypersensitizing previous experience: Finally painting again after nearly half a year, and thus experiencing that act with an acute sensibility*, particularly with respect to durations and attainments. [* Sensitivity, sensibility, sensibilité, sensible: Here are words where the matching-up of English and French has some complication, some crossing of wires; the type of such scenarios might be ordonner / order / commander / demand / demander.
I also have to mention the smile elicited from me in the final scene, when Frenhofer says that, to a painter, les mots ne comptent pas.]

Disaster! I am heartbroken! I became extremely nervous when I began preparing to give Bella her threefold Christmas gift. She became annoyed and told me to stop being weird, but I could not. I remade my writing because of how hurt I was when I gave an initial version to her and she

called it an “essay,” because of all the pejorative connotations I heard in that word. She didn’t understand my reaction even though I explained it to her. She read it this time and called it an “essay explaining the painting,” and then said she did not want to see herself naked (the precise response I had hoped the writing would preempt). So I could not show her the painting, even though I was trying as hard as I could, and I could not play her my song either, because she became angry that I was being weird. I could not say anything, so I tried to hold her hand so I would not seem angry or heartbroken, but then she told me “I can’t do this right now.”

30 January 2025

Proust’s “Esquisse pour les deux côtés,” in my folio classique edition 591ff.

From the short introduction, first, a phrase which makes me think directly of my two voices, Ludovic and Nemo, whether or not I end up giving them the voices “I” and “he” (and so for the latter putting into the third person, in a direct transposition, half the mass of things I will say) or find some other way to consummate the doubling which I’ve been thinking I need: Theirs will be one of the “major symmetries” of my work, and the value of this phrase is the view of the work-object that it entails. “L’opposition du côté de chez Swann et du côté de Guermantes constitue l’une des symétries majeures de la Recherche” (591).

The introduction also provides another striking turn of phrase: “la réminiscence [provoquée par le heurt d’une fourchette sur une assiette, etc.] donne lieu à un exposé en forme de l’esthétique proustienne” (592). Perhaps this “Proustian aesthetic” is the kernel which the following enshrines.

I pause to import words from Walter Benjamin that came before me on 20 December 2024. These words I have emphatically taken for granted; how? Via Prof. Landy, in some way I took to heart without preserving a citational tag? In any case, I accept them newly on Benjamin’s (not absolute) authority: “What Baudelaire meant by correspondances can be described as an experience which seeks to establish itself in crisis-proof form. [Crisis-proof: Hence the insistence on reality, explicability, demonstrability; or, perhaps, the component of Symbolist aesthetics that Annick Ettlin outsources to “pragmatism.”] This is possible only within the realm of ritual [hold on:]. If it transcends this realm, it presents itself as the beautiful. In the beautiful, ritual value appears as the value of art. [So we end up with ritual value--e.g., the axiomatic adoption of a framework such as la peinture (looking with a history-cultivated body-eye at a flat surface covered with pastes and hung on a wall)--indispensable to beauty. At a glance, this resembles conservatism, or resembles a window through which conservative attitudes can climb; but this is a mere pseudomorphism, because it is really, here, a matter of règles du jeu, whether those rules be the framework of the Mass or the systems which would become the substrate, the playing field, of Jasper Johns]” (“On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” in The Writer of Modern Life (Harvard 2006) 198).

That was, mostly, a detour. The main import from Benjamin is this one: He quotes Proust, what

he calls a “confessional motto for Proust’s work.” “In Baudelaire ... these reminiscences are even more numerous. It is obvious they do not occur by chance, and this, to my mind, is what gives them crucial importance. No one else pursues the interconnected correspondances with such leisurely care, fastidiously yet nonchalantly—in a woman's scent, for instance, in the fragrance of her hair or her breasts—correspondances which then inspire him with lines like ‘the azure of the vast, vaulted sky’ or ‘a harbor full of flames and masts’” (qtd. 199).

I pay particular attention to “No one else pursues the interconnected correspondances with such leisurely care, fastidiously yet nonchalantly—in a woman's scent, for instance, in the fragrance of her hair or her breasts”; here he enshrines an posture, obviously intrinsic to--but not completely reducible to--that of the flâneur.

I link one more Benjamin line, adding exercises to this posture. He speaks of Proust’s “lifelong exercises in which he strove to bring to light past things saturated with all the reminiscences that had penetrated his pores during the sojourn of those things in his unconscious” (196).

These exercises, and this posture, are what I find in the esquisse I was just looking at.*

I assemble all this just to say that my own aesthetic practice has long since assumed this very same form. (Whether or not this was programmatic, as it apparently first wasn’t and then later was, for Proust; and also, I’ve developed a sort of facility with this that I could even aspire to think of as a craft)--of course, all along with the pursuit and working of “adorning so” (Cavalcanti) the canzone, the painting, the epistolary prism, adornments which may take the form of maintaining structures from among which one could speak of “one of the major symmetries” of the work.)

[* For example: “C'est de ces promenades solitaires que je fis à l'automne du côté de Meséglise que date une des lois vraiment immuables de ma vie spirituelle. Tout d'un coup tandis qu'une image passait sous mes yeux ou dans ma pensée, je sentais à un plaisir particulier, à une sorte de profondeur, qu'il y avait quelque chose sous elle, une réalité plus profonde. Je ne savais quoi. Je gardais précieusement l'image dans ma pensée, je marchais avec précaution comme de peur de la faire envoler. Quelquefois je me persuadais que ce n'était qu'à la maison devant mon papier que je pourrais l'ouvrir avec sécurité, et trouver son contenu intellectuel. C'était un clocher que j'avais vu filer dans le lointain, une fleur de sauge, une tête de jeune fille. Je sentais que là-dessous il y avait une impression, et je revenais à la maison rapportant mon impression vivante cachée sous cette image qui la signifiait comme on rapporte sous l'herbe qui la garde fraîche une carpe qu'on a pêchée. Arrivé à la maison j'ouvrais mon panier, je tâchais de soulever l'herbe et de saisir le poisson s'il ne s'était pas échappé en route. Jamais ce n'est la grandeur, la valeur rationnelle d'une idée qui m'a depuis donné la sensation de sa beauté, qui m'a dit: voilà, il y a du beau, du vrai là-dessous, il y a quelque chose à creuser. C'est quelque image qui était a priori sans valeur intellectuelle quelque clocher filant dans une perspective, quelque fleur de sauge, quelque tête de jeune fille, quelque forme qui s'imposait à moi” (592-593). I cannot help but wonder whether the physical action, the practice, the craft, which the artist performs in this capacity has something in common with the activity of the patient of Freudian (Lacanian too?) analysis. One finds something in the flux of sensation (which flux is the confluence of the sometimes-apparently (but only apparently) mirror-still waters of memory and the sometimes-unbearably-turbulent currents of present experience), and one preserves it, splays it in words (in paint if one could! Maybe someday; now, my paint doesn’t go an inch to faithfully deposit the distillate (insight? memory?) while my words can go far enough to make me feel, often though not always, complete). The words I copied above from the esquisse just name what is meant by the côté de Guermantes. That

of Combray is, so briefly, the mémoire involontaire epiphany, represented this time not by the madeleine in the teacup but by the clinking of knife against picnic plate which superposes the present moment with a past one; the past one is one of surpassing spleen, but in this superposition it becomes the substrate of a new moment of profound worth--which, incidentally, commands the artist immediately into a monkish summons to his pen and paper, to record (594-595). I ask, not urgently, what use there is in the specificity of this dutiful reporting to transcription, if not just to establish, on a theoretical plane, the sheer fact that such a moment of transport is possible to persons.]

31 January 2025

Reassertion of my interest in Rabelais's Pantagruel and guignol theater (mediated/distilled by a Mathis-Collins-type lens especially).

(The pairing is doubly twined: Recall that Collins's 15 Orient exhibition elicited the adjective "Rabelasian" [sic.] from Sean Tatol; and also, Alfred Jarry enshrines their pairing in his Ubu Roi: that play is considered a descendent of Gargantua and Pantagruel's comic grotesquerie, and Jarry stated that his intention for the play was to "write a guignol." These seem to be the two main sources of Ubu's DNA, aside from the composite of Shakespeare's tragedies which supply the plot, and the Sophoclean titles.)

Ubu also makes glow again the net of figures I can't seem to put down: puppets (special to Rilke); commedia dell'arte (made alive by Picasso's rose paintings, which, incidentally, were also special to Rilke); and Le pitre châtié, which is perhaps the ur-site of what I am about to point to in the next paragraph.

In particular, I want my culling of plot devices, character types, problemata, and textures to be lifted from Rabelais and guignol but through the distilling/rarefaction lens of these two essays: "Alas, Poor Yorick! … The Being of Spirit is a Bone" by Nathan Brown and "The Master Is Undead" by Mladen Dolar, both in Problemi International no. 6.* They impose a Lacanian angle, a fixation on certain concepts, problemata, registers of abstraction, that I want to mark & color everything I cull from these sources. I feel, among other things, that this will put me in direct contact with the Hantaï of that Warnock essay on the Femelles miroirs and those Meuns, and with the café conversation from Agnès Varda about men and women and bulls in Miró, and with the specific Hemingway of The Sun Also Rises, and with the Godard of Prénom: Carmen (with its quartet and its hotel room) and Pierrot le Fou (with the scene in the hideout apartment: its shirt and, most of all, its paintings).

[* I found this journal, I forget how, by way of Alenka Zupančič, in whom I am again interested because of Olivia Kan-Sperling; Kan-Sperling's Heavy Traffic story had such an excellent style and execution that I felt breathtaken; I went back to her Lacanian (Zupančič-

Žižek) piece that spiraled outward from that very striking Abercrombie publication, and intend to embark therefrom on a full pass of Zupančič's What Is Sex?, whose energy and force I hope to maintain in paintings that are more sustainable than the new one I've just made, paintings which, perhaps, extend the Francis Bacon that made Bertolucci** make Last Tango in Paris (which may be the same Bacon that made Deleuze write Logique de sens); I've recently learned from the painter Kira Scerbin how Bacon can be extended--not that I want to extend him in the same way that she does, but that I want to have the same area of contact with his work that she has, and extend from him there in my own direction.]

[** I cannot help but add the perhaps paranoid (in the sense of hallucinatory) doubling of an extant link: in the standard account, what Bertolucci took from Pasolini was the sheer texture that is directly analogous between the Pasolini film he worked on (Accattone?) and the first film he (Bertolucci) made thereafter--the fact that these two films obviously acted in exactly the same world, etc. But I have something else. Of all that Pasolini has done to me, nothing was so devastating (I recall Kissick: art "should bring us to our knees" and "destroy reality") as the bowling-ball-to-gut, dissolving-of-brain experience of watching Salò. Perhaps the greatness of Bertolucci's and Brando's and Schneider's Last Tango is that it was in touch with precisely the same truth: that sex is, before anything else, the horizon of the person, the beyond of selfhood, the destroying of identity. And this truth seems to be the one which defines Zupančič's specific position, the one which she uniquely records in What is Sex?.]

As a superfluous appendix: I paste the abstracts of those two Problemi International papers.

Brown:

"This paper addresses the relation between famous phrases in Shakespeare and Hegel—"Alas, Poor Yorick!" and "The being of spirit as a bone"—
which punctuate reflections upon the materiality of spirit. Meditating upon the challenge these enunciations pose to the living thought of dead matter, the author takes Hegel's infinite judgment as an incitement to consider the problem of existence in Hamlet at the level of the material occupation of space. From this perspective, the article argues that Hamlet is pervasively concerned with the metaphysical riddles, political implications, and meta-theatrical effects of spirit's spatial existence—not only in the graveyard scene or in the play's famous philosophical soliloquys, but also in its subplots and apparently minor episodes. Property, warfare, station, the relation between nature and artifice, the material supports of writing and desire are inscribed in spatial economies of displacement, exchange, and dissolution that persistently accompany and conjoin the play's intimate psychological dramas and overarching political framework. Ultimately, this is a matter of what it means for bodies to be displayed on a stage."

Dolar:

"The paper takes as its starting point the anecdote of Freud's visit to Slovenia in April 1898, when he by coincidence met dr. Karl Lueger, the burgomaster of Vienna and the notorious antisemitic populist leader whom none other than Hitler later took as the role model. Lueger represented at the time a new type of the figure of the master, after the demise of the traditional paternal figures which served as the models of

authority. The anecdote can be taken as emblematic of the political role of psychoanalysis which at its inception had to confront a new type of authority and a logic which stretches from that time up to the present. The paper further considers two cases of new grotesque masters after the political shift of modernity, Marx's confrontation with Louis Bonaparte in The Eighteenth Brumaire, and the fictional figure of Ubu proposed by Alfred Jarry (roughly at the time of Freud's anecdotical encounter of Lueger) and which Michel Foucault took as the paradigm of "grotesque sovereignty." The second part of the paper tries to figure out how the seemingly excessive figures of new populist masters fit into the structure of what Lacan described as the discourse of the university, which presented for him the discourse that subtends the social ties after the advent of modernity. The populist masters can be taken as the symptoms of that constellation, following Lacan's gloomy predictions of the rise of segregation on the basis of university discourse, with the advancement of science, the common markets and the spread of universalization."

El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo, Ms & II. 5 f° 18

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Beatus_of_Li%C3%A9bana

On the last evening in January I create a sequence of images and call it "Romantic."

1 February 2025

A word-image, all fixed, set with an enormous sense of necessity, as I was awakening: "Like une fleuve d'insommellité."

I like that there's an English word that fits in nicely. I like that "insommellité" feels like the word "femellité" [with the connotations Warnock noted as "femelle" sits in distinction to "féminin"] if it underwent two transformations: Sommeil for femelle, and then an inversion.

I'm uneasy with the quality that it has of resembling a product of the games of random recombination of the Surrealists. These games were never what Reverdy was about when he said "two more or less distant realities." His two realities (an image in their contact) always had a much more enormous sense of necessity in place of the frequent sense of arbitrariness in Dalí and, sometimes, even Rimbaud.

Also, it has sense, and seems to defy Chomsky's weak attempt at a senseless sentence, "colorless green ideas sleep furiously," which I always thought was bullshit, it obviously means something.

[On the third of February, I hear the song "Daydream" for the first time, a cover, and then The Wallace Collection's original. The first time I heard the first line I heard it as "[unintelligible] / A fell asleep and bit the flowers / For a couple of hours / What a beautiful day." Really it is "Daydream / I fell asleep amid the flowers." In my mishearing, it reminds me of an idiomatic expression that I can't quite remember, on the tip of my tongue: Something between "eat the dust" or "bite the dust" or "bite the bullet," on the one hand, and "tomber dans les pommes" on the other. Something about falling into daisies? All this just to say that my mishearing feels as unique, impossibly unlikely, and perfectly necessary as those dreamt word-images.]

Every time I say "huile d'amande," I think of the summery air among the trees outside the successive homes of Pierre Bonnard: All the sensation and the companionship that was the aroma thereamong, and all of it remembered in his last blurry vision of the Amandier en fleur, which he continued to paint even as, in the last moment, he had to let Claude Terrasse hold his brush.

If every part of me comes from somewhere, it is my optic nerve which comes from Bonnard. I thought it would be a muscle in my wrist, and tried to make it so in May-ish of last year, but it is his circulatory ophthalmology.

Is there blame to be cast among those trees? Any number of things could have caused Renée Monchaty to take her life into her hands. In my dream, it was the painter's silence.

The painter's silence: No words could have pulled Marthe out of her immersion, and so no words were spoken. Her body dissolved in that pearlescent liquid like an organism in its (amniotic-reminiscent) chrysalis fluid. But that bathtub cocoon will not open, will not shed its porcelain skin-leaves (foliae) (will not exfoliate, then, etymologically), until the end of time.

When Tristan Corbière penned his Amours jaunes in Brittany (was it? Where?), was Ludovic Nemo even then showing his fictive life's only paintings? (No; they were perhaps painted in

Pont-Aven, but they were shown at the Café des Arts (“chez Volpini”) in Paris, just as Corbière’s only volume was published in Paris (“chez Glady frères”).) Anyway, Morlaix is on the north side of the Breton finger, Pont-Aven on the south.

How many Amours jaunes are there? (There are 24; there are 21 Raccrocs; maybe one of these convenes.) How many paintings in Ludovic Nemo’s exhibition? (25 from Bernard, dont 2 signed Nemo.) Could each of these be a layer of the oscillatory architecture, accumulating the interpositions ever more subtly (Linati-style)?

The Breton site is probably conducive to the guignol apparatus, at any rate.

I went to the Gaylord Apartments today. I met John, and spoke with him for half an hour; then I walked to the other side of the block, where I bought a corn and hotdog pastry for myself, a triangle kimbap for Bella, and a box of sweet potato castelli for later.

John told me these things:

He moved into this apartment in 2018, and still lives there. (I have read that the gallery was started in 2021; I thought I had read that it was started by painter Joseph Geagan. I think they both run it. Online, Joseph indicates that John’s birthday is today.)

The photogravure “Leash” depicts Kye Christensen-Knowles, whom John calls a “very talented painter,” two of whose paintings hang in tiny reproduction above where I paint, an inch and a half to a side. John tells me he is the boyfriend of the artist. I was embarrassed when I asked whether the artist was the face in the photo; I thought I recognized him from online.

The photogravure “Gloves” depicts “Jordan,” perhaps Jordane Stawecki, who, John tells me, met Henry at Fire Island, and was initially John’s roommate in this apartment. (I think it is that when he moved out, John used all the extra space for the gallery.)

I wonder how much he sells? His is among the best galleries in L.A., but he mentioned that he works at a restaurant, and that Jake Stutz will have paintings in the back room at the upcoming opening (are they ones that did not sell a couple months ago at that painter’s show?).

He asked me what I’d do the rest of the day and I expressed cheerful hopelessness about looking for employment. He told me about nyfa.com then, and he said he’d ask around. Very kind.

It is surprising to me--really it is, even if I might not be believed--but I am enamored with the look of my handwriting, the way it looks here on this paper, written quite drunk (martini and dill pickle martini and glasses of malbec-malbec) last night to tell me what I should hope to do to day. The third capital "S" took me three tries to write (I had the pen a bit too twisted), and the result is one of the most beautiful forms I've ever happened to create in ink on paper. Maybe I can turn it into an ink painting in the manner of Guillot and Verstraeten.

I have begun reading Eurotrash with the almost unwitting dread that comes with the partially-suppressed knowledge that it might disillusion me in this particular way: That it might permanently neuter my l'allure. I was trying to decide whether to watch The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant tonight, in fulfillment of an intention held remarkably long, or The Wind that Shakes the Barley, in fulfillment of an intention held not quite as long but with a deadline impending. I determined, when I opened my eyes clearly to the crucial juncture that the opening of this Kracht book amounts to, that I must confront Petra tonight.

I was thinking, on page 36, that I was faced with the necessity to willfully suspend the then-apparently-inevitable breaking of the spell that I felt was at hand. This voice has an unforeseeable power to deflate, I could see, and somehow every corner of every line produced markings of territories beyond what I could have even conceived as existent to be marked (not the conjunction of aestheticized post-aristocracy and my Rossinière-Diablerets paradiso!: "She'd been my nanny, part of an age-old lineage of noblewomen from the Bernese Oberland. … Elsie von Oehrli had lived down the road, at the bend leading down to the Palace Hotel in Gstaad. … Her curtains were of embroidered linen. The floor in her bedroom was splintery wood, and in her little garden white roses blossomed along the wooden fence. And she herself smelled as clean and pure as the freshly washed white sheets on the line, dried by the warm foehn wind blowing down the Glacier des Diablerets and through the valley to us.").

But then I read page 37, and by its end, having come to apprehend Kracht's latest work as an authentic work of art (and not just a new shiny installment of contemporary literature), veritably posing the incomparable lows of human experience against the incomparable heights of the same experience, I realized that reading this book to completion can in fact only breathe ever new life into l'allure and all the rest of those forces which never permanently cease to make my world wide and varied and bright and new and worthwhile. The words immediately following the ones above reproduced are these: "At this I fell asleep and did not dream for a long time, and as soon as I awoke the next morning I remembered the paper bag and the sweater inside it I had purchased the previous evening at Bahnhofstrasse. I got up, went to the bathroom, and cleaned my teeth. Then I sat on the edge of the bed, removed the sweater from the bag, and buried my face in it. It smelled earthy, like hay and damp wool, like dog and sawdust and dry leaves. And

the way it smelled and felt was such that I slipped on the sweater over bare skin and hugged myself before the hotel-room mirror, as I had always done long ago, in front of the mirrors of my childhood."
At this I can soundly pour myself a wide, razor-thin wine glass of ron dominicano gran añejo, take a slice of that sweet potato pastry from the Koreatown central mall (did they call it castelli? Cassatelli? Castellini?), and watch this movie.

2 February 2025

Homeless fragment of a thought from December floats to here:

"Nosferatu shoes and the clothes Grandpa wears in pictures and the clothes I would wear while operating Brook and Whittle machines"

I cannot find the place, but I think it was something Proust wrote, maybe in La Recherche, maybe in a note for it, that enshrined Stendhal as the epitomization of all the novelists that came before him, as the best of what he and all around him could read. It is, in any case, this sentiment that made me take The Red and the Black off my shelf the most recent time I saw it, having forgotten I'd even picked up this copy someone had discarded.

In the introduction, there is a figure worth remembering. It is a matter of crystallization. Just another thing to add to a long body (by no means outweighing any crystalline figuration from Mallarmé or a Sicilian poet or whoever else), but worthwhile nonetheless; and what Stendhal's temperament gives truth of voice to has to do with Cavalcanti's "dove sta memora": The figure of crystallization bears witness to the contact between love and memory (I speak no more specifically, I retain a maximum of generality), and that is all I take from Stendhal, for now.

"[Speaking of the penning of Stendhal's autobiographical Life of Henri Brulard:] It is Dichtung und Wahrheit, of course, as Goethe labelled his own narrative: truth and imagination, and how to disentangle the two? Did the inspiration for the work come to him, as he says, on an idyllic October morning of 1832, as he sat contemplating, from one of the Eternal Hills of Rome, the vast panorama laid out before him? Hardly. He was in fact not even in Rome on the date he gives, and the first pages were written in November 1835. But his imagination had 'crystallised'. / In a famous analogy in his treatise On Love, Stendhal compares falling in love to the process whereby a bare twig, thrown into the salt mines of Salzburg, is later retrieved covered in scintillating crystals; the object of passionate love, so he claimed, is similarly transformed in the mind of the lover. It is certainly one way of falling in love, arguably not the best. The analogy fits even better the process whereby his creative imagination 'crystallised' around experience and events, transforming them into his fictional universe. He did not make a plan, nor invent the story, both things seemed to freeze his inspiration. When he wrote (or

dictated) the sentences had to flow rapidly, spontaneously, and so he needed a ready-made plot, a launching-pad for the imagination, as indeed did Shakespeare. He called it building on stilts. / There is no lack of information about the 'stilts,' the structures on which Stendhal built …" (xi-xii).

Another thing from the Stendhal introduction: It is not particularly distinctive, but I felt I may as well crystallise it (so to speak) because it is something I've had my eye on at least since March of 2021, when I was thinking of Julian Schnabel and the Spanish paintings at the Meadows Museum. (Much more deeply, it has to do with the Spain whose matadors Goya painted for the Kimbell and Hemingway turned into angelic figures burning their combats into the golden sky.) "It was to this great admirer of Corneille's heroic play Le Cid, he says in Brulard, that he owed all the exaggerated 'Spanish notions' of honour and grandeur of character which were the 'duperies,' as he puts it with a touch of self-irony, of the first thirty years of his life" (xiii). Maybe that Corneille play could be a useful condensation of Spanish notions, at least as a distantly subtending guide.

There is a dictate, and I don't know where it comes from, but I've always felt it true, that good art is all that which makes the world feel wider, brighter, newer, and more varied, and bad art all that which does the opposite; and that none of those comparative adjectives can be rigorously defined, but that no one can mistake the feeling. Maybe I can at least say this: When one is consciously washed-over by either of those, which may not combine to cover anywhere near the majority of one's experiences of art, at least then one need not think any harder about whether what is at hand is good or bad.

Rivette's "Belle Noiseuse," to raise a different kind of example, made me feel both extremes, quite intensely, at different points.

What, then, of the specific character T.J. Clark imputes (in "Strange Apprentice," on Pissarro and Cézanne) to Pissarro's highly-specific (to his mind; I've never been able to pick out his brush from any lineup of Impressionists, for myself) and -consistent painting?

"An outright coldness of colour has given way, as it regularly does in Pissarro's painting from this time, to something hovering between temperatures – and, even more, between intensities, between brightness and dullness. Any reproduction is bound to get this slightly wrong, since the dullness of the scene, and the intensity of that dullness, inheres in oil paint's opacity, its smeared matt surface, which a reproduction is bound to tune up a little and render more 'lit from within'. There is no inner light in Pissarro, no trace of the numinous. / I have found that each time I see Paysage à Pontoise again at the Ashmolean – it belonged early on to Degas and came to Oxford from a private collection in 1940 – there is at first a moment of disappointment. Is the world as we see it really as unlit as this one, as subdued, even on a good

day? I said ‘at first’, but in a Pissarro of this kind the disappointment persists as we go on looking: it is part of the painting’s disenchantment of its genre. Landscape, and the kinds of attention and distraction it fosters – the unfolding of a natural scene in front of us, the suspension of workaday time as we let it come forward, the fact and feel of its surrounding us, containing us – no doubt became, in the 19th century, painting’s prime resource. They were what art had left. But they had to disappoint. … Nature doesn’t have high points, is one way of saying it. It is not picturesque. Or rather, looking now specifically at Paysage à Pontoise, the incidents and episodes it does possess – the hay cart, the horses, the brittle fence at the turn of the path, the poplars on the horizon – must cede to the overcast, the overall, the non-ominous totality. / So the true intensity of the new painting, Pissarro proposes, will inhere in its showing us what, after all, of beauty – of emphasis, of the suddenness of things seen – is there inthe dullness, not ‘punctuating’ it, not coming out of it. This is Pissarro’s painting’s triumph: the complete steadiness of its hold on a single plain state of the light; the subduing of every separate entity to that state; and the peculiar beauty of that submission.”

I cannot (now) figure out any way in which this is not incidental, but when I slowly work into an awareness of the tall built structures (if, indeed, those forms are not tree; but in any case, I imagine them so; and, incidentally, Clark agrees that there are houses on a hill whose silhouettes are visible among trees) beyond the trees in Pissarro’s Le Champ de choux, Pontoise, another represented space wriggles into my mind: the childhood home of Jeanne in Last Tango in Paris. (Do not let these stills stand in for Bertolucci’s filmed representation that is in question, and do not even let an extracted scene of about half a minute stand in for it, either; the representation of this “yard,” or whatever you might call it, the pastoral* memory of childhood, has a duration of two hours and nine minutes, precisely.)

[* “Pastoral” here only in the abstraction of the register in which Derrida applied it to a letter Hantaï wrote to Nancy in the exchange that was then passed on to Derrida.]

The precisely specific commonality between these two, its subtlety, all the variables upon which this correspondance relies, & the cultivation of sensitivities ("sensibilities" here is freely substitutable; the two words' wires get crossed in translation, anyway) to these "all the variables": That is what makes to scintillate so brightly my memory of the space at 1205 Canterbury Court.

This whole passage, in Clark's "Strange Apprentice," is brilliant; it has to do with the inherent complication that I always tuck safely into the term "optic nerve" (it has to do precisely, in fact, with the very same fraught sight of the inheritance of the handful of problematical Impressionist notions against which ground Elderfield traced Bonnard's painting, in that essay).

It also has to do, I think, with this particular moment in Luke Herrigel's press release for Eyrie Alzate, the last lines: "This point of attention is not an answer or an original conclusion, but clarity in the fold of pursuit. Facing not its own self, but facing the unresolvable and stepping further."

"'Je vois, par taches.' I have still not quite faced the most obvious, and yet in the end most difficult, characteristic of Impressionism: namely, its pace and freedom of handling. Clearly pace and freedom in a painting like Le Champ de choux don't have to do with approximation or not being sure of what you see. Le Champ de choux is not preliminary to anything. It is not a sketch. But specific identities and occurrences in it do come out of a looser and more ad hoc flow of touches than most previous painters would have allowed themselves. Each dab of pigment strikes hard for an equivalent of a perception, without apology or prevarication; but at the same time it declares itself, in its very form, its speed and abbreviation, ready to be interrupted or overtaken by another.

The question, again, is what this loosening and restlessness do to our understanding of the scene.

I do not think, pace Meyer Schapiro, that in the end the new handling is essentially a means of insisting on the 'individuality' of any one painter's apprehension. Personal freedom is a given for Pissarro; but his anarchism does not seem to have been built around the idea of an irreducible ego. It was founded more on a confidence in commonality, in the world as a thing to be shared. The individual and the commonplace in experience go together: that is Le Champ de choux's message. Here is the world as we know it, ordinary through and through; and the world as it never has been before, and never will be again.

I take it that Cézanne was right in believing that freedom and openness of handling in Pissarro was bound up with a theory of politics. 'Inquiry modifies our way of seeing to such an extent that the humble and colossal Pissarro finds himself justified in his anarchist theories.' ('L'étude modifie notre vision à un tel point que l'humble et colossal Pissarro se trouve justifié de ses théories anarchistes.') Sustained attention to anything, that is to say – let alone the kind of relentless concentration and elaboration of vision that comes from painting seriously – transforms the parameters of seeing. The human sensorium is plastic: it is changed by use – changed for the better. And what is true of the senses may be true of the instincts, and of our established patterns of knowing and being. We can but hope. Loosen the hold of likeness in painting, in the meantime, and wait for the moment at which the 'known' disappears. Let the tree in the half-dark replace it.

I said that these painters believed the world had somehow to happen to a picture – impinge on it, touch it. This ultimately is the point of the 'tache'. It puts us back in the moment when the world occurs to the sensorium; and at that point it isn't clear to the painting subject whether the occurrence is something made by the mind – by the mind's eye – or entirely a material event, an actual unstoppable touch of light on the receptor evolved to receive it. Is the 'tache' transitive or intransitive, in other words? It is certainly a made thing, but made by what ... by whom?

This brings us back to Schapiro and the question of individualism. Both Cézanne and Pissarro put their trust in the idea that their painting was founded on truth to their own irreducible 'petite sensation'. But what the 'petite sensation' was remained for them a mystery. This was the great thing that painting was meant to find out. Yes, it was 'mine'; but as I made the actual marks that were my seeing ('Je vois, par taches'), I came to understand that in some sense it did not belong to me at all – or at least to the 'me' of the mind, of subjectivity. It, the 'sensation', was the contact – the deep structure of the contact – between sensorium and surrounding. Unique to each individual, doubtless, but full of a materiality, an exposure to the exterior, that put individuality at risk."

More Clark brilliance, this time culminating in a stunning picture of the 20th century (that is, modernity, the unresolved moment whose stakes are mine, moment whose fate, that is, it has come down to (through?) right now to decide), that century which Mallarmé perhaps in some strange way permitted Jarry to tee up, and which then Stein and Pound and Eliot made to live so brilliantly. (Also, on the way there, a very interesting dynamics of submission: It is ever, up through Johns and all the way to now (and for everyone, from Bataille and Heidegger through Hantaï and Nancy), a question of precisely how to destroy the self, and precisely what takes its place.

"Two things to add. First, it is true that many copies are never intended to be faithful: they are meant from the start as free translations, submitting someone else's vision to one's own. But I

don't think this was the case with the Cézanne. It was a true act of submission. It wished to enter into Pissarro's way of seeing and doing things. And, second, that is what makes the divergences so telling. They assert themselves against Cézanne's will. They are the 'deep structure' of his vision taking hold of the picture as he works. The interest of the copy is not that Cézanne couldn't do these many things that Pissarro could, but that the failures turn out to have their own coherence, their own aesthetic dignity: they shadow forth the Cézanne we know.
I have inevitably dramatised the differences between the two paintings by putting them into words, and maybe I have made the Cézanne more a premonition of things to come than it is. And therefore, I realise, the various absences and negations I see taking over the Cézanne as it tries to reproduce Pissarro begin to turn – I feel it as I set them out – into positives, or at least into a set of negatives that enact a sense of things we might come to regard as closer, in their negativity, to the feel of the world we have, we 'moderns'. The reader will have registered the familiars: groundlessness, airlessness, absence of contact, lack of distance but also of proximity, lack of the sense of a palpable shared world – a world of work or a world of pleasure – uncertainty, a strange false vividness. Though perhaps the 'false' is wrong. Look again at Maison et arbre, and talk instead of a vividness that is irresistible but puts one nowhere. This is the Cézanne who defined a century."

And now, this Cézanne, "modernity's patron saint," comes to prompt questions from me: If I propose salvation* in such aesthetic devices as Mallarmé and Baudelaire (and Rilke and Reverdy and … all the saints of re-Symbolism) made material ("devised"?), do these not rely axiomatically on what Clark will here call "infinite gradation," that which, when I read these words, I picture as the very same wonder that kept Proust miraculously childlike all through his illness (the very same that is his irreplaceable gift to each of his readers)? And how, then, could Pissarro's imagination of colour be traded for Cézanne's? Maybe Clark dramatizes for the sake of an essay's narrative. Or perhaps, as one might be able to feel by paragraph's end, Clark means to show that Cézanne extended the field of play inward, much as did Heidegger; he freed more and dearer variables, pulled the horizon of the open question closer to the heart, even while Pissarro's searching had, of course, eventually, to be taken back up, too. [* aesthetic redemption (not mutually exclusive with an authentic Catholicism nor, likely, but who am I to say, other theological systems: I make of art no secular religion, no retrospective substitute), that is, of life such as it is now, in this world, today, 2025 even, just like I was trying to in 2022, not that nothing has changed, but my call is the same urge, even if refined beyond recognition]
"'Atmosphere' remains one of Cézanne's great subjects. But the tree in Jas de Bouffan – the tree as it intersects with the water – shows his attention going in a different direction. 'Space' peels away from the totality of time, light and atmospherics, and starts to become a thing in itself. The building blocks of the wall in the mid-ground – is it a wall or a strange hacked-out escarpment? – are this new space's reality congealed. I say 'the space's reality', but surely in Jas de Bouffan the whole felt world, the spatial surrounding, ends up as unreal – as uncanny – as it is real and matter-of-fact. Its solidity is ironised as soon as insisted on: the building-block wall, the reader will notice, vanishes in the pool's mirror. Space is becoming something palpable, yes, a separate entity; but therefore, it seems, a riddle. Colour is not so much the carrier of infinite gradation as the form of space. And therefore sensation itself – the moment of apprehension – is no longer felt, in the picture, as an opening onto a presence, a set of things ineluctably 'out there'. There

may indeed be a world in Jas de Bouffan ... but where has it come from? Where is our apprehension of it located? Even – though this question takes us beyond the terms Cézanne himself would have understood, or maybe tolerated – whose apprehension is it?"

(With its play of reflection, I can consider this painting Cézanne's correspondent to Bonnard's mirror-play café, paned in glass and hued with an ethereal nighttime yellow, as I remember it.) I don't note this to further the line above, but Clark's essay closes with a personally devastating flourish, an Ignatian device of the imagination, perhaps, in light of his having sainted Cézanne. "Modernity is loss of world. Cézanne is the painter who makes that cliché draw blood. And a very great deal of his painting's intensity derived, I think, from the fact of his coming across this new sense of things in the company of Pissarro. Put Jas de Bouffannext to Inondation à Saint-Ouen-L'Aumône. The latter is dated 1873. (Saint-Ouen was a few miles downstream from Auvers, a village just beginning to be a suburb.) Look at the stretch of land in Saint-Ouen leading off between the trees to the village ... and the awkward pomposity of the house and chimney in the centre ... the factory smokestack just visible through branches to the left ... the birds battling the wind, the clouds still threatening rain ... the reflection in the water of the fruit tree's supports. Humble and colossal. Every observation solid as a rock. A social world. The earth emerging after the flood. What must it have been like to have discovered, under such painting's spell, that Pissarro's feeling for time and place – his anarchist confidence in history beginning again – could not be one's own?"

3 February 2025

In actual Stendhal, I was most of all taken aback by the abbreviation of many of the scenes--the pace is like Otranto, or like a puppet show about the child prodigy Mozart, not like a landmark in literary realism. Surely I haven't read far enough, only skipped around up through the sixteenth chapter, but what I read resembled Jean-Baptiste Pater's A Fête Champêtre During the Grape Harvest more closely than it did anything else--just a scene-by-scene of formulaic, if sprightly, seduction.

If I ever get asked to do a press release, I'd probably either want it to be like the one for Uri Aran at Matthew Brown, or like the one for Henry Belden at Gaylord. Either make it like an artist's

frame for the exhibition as a whole, some exterior facts (Belden); or make it in dialogue with the artist, drawing out one way to "look at" (a verb denoting everything the act really entails, everything that crosses the mind and draws upon the sentiments) everything (Aran).

On Petra von Kant: "At once languorous and hard-edge, minimal and over the top," says NYT in 2015; "Transfixed by something so mannered yet vigorous, I was peripherally aware of other spectators stampeding for the exits. Were they fleeing the prison of Petra's thwarted desire or the baleful authority of the outsize alien talent that had crashed among us?" And when, after identifying the wallpapered painting as Poussin's Midas and Bacchus (1624), the reviewer speaks of "Poussin's bleary after-party," what I feel is an overwhelming sense of positive possibility: That a bleary after-party is something that can be taken in as such and adored.

Something so mannered yet vigorous, at once languorous and hard-edge, minimal and over the top: These are the same tensions that I savored, so exquisite, while I watched it across two nights. Carstensen's rivulet of tears invites a comparison to "plastic," but not just for the trite resonance of superficiality; it literally looks like it is made out of some kind of transparent acrylic, and, in that moment, I was literally uncertain whether her face was still hers or had been cleverly substituted for a mannequin, so consummate was Fassbinder's control of light and color, as to create this confusion of two textures, the most animate surface of the body and the most dead artifact of commerce.

I chatter to myself about things like huile d'amande and how I never before now noticed the framing correspondance of the visages in my two Bonnard postcards, happening both to coincide in the dogs too. I was probably primed to notice it right now because of what I just wrote down about the faces in "Grid" and "Mask" that Henry Belden had at Gaylord.

I chatter to myself about things like that; but this is just in a moderate class of effects of loneliness, or of isolation. It can't be said to be inordinate, can it. Or: it can't be said to be inordinate, can it?

4 February 2025

An uncollected and untitled Rilke poem new to me feels like it sensitizes, polarizes, makes fully palpably intense the two steepest sides of the one force which animates Deleuze's Difference and Repetition.

"Now it is time that gods came walking out
of lived-in Things …
Time that they came and knocked down every wall
inside my house. New page. Only the wind
from such a turning could be strong enough
to toss the air as a shovel tosses dirt:
a fresh-turned field of breath. O gods, gods!
who used to come so often and are still
asleep in the Things around us, who serenely
rise and at wells that we can only guess at
splash icy water on your necks and faces,
and lightly add your restedness to what seems
already filled to bursting: our full lives.
Once again let it be your morning, gods.
We keep repeating. You alone are source.
With you the world arises, and your dawn
gleams on each crack and crevice of our failure …" (Mitchell's translation on p. 277 in my Vintage collection)

No words for breathing (singing) newness quite like "to toss the air as a shovel tosses dirt: / a fresh-turned field of breath" and "who serenely / rise and at wells that we can only guess at / splash icy water on your necks and faces"; no putting it into play as well-places as "We keep repeating. You alone are source."

The gods "who serenely / rise and at wells that we can only guess at / splash icy water on your necks and faces" remind me of that person looking in "the high place of the mind" in that Chesterton book which I have not revisited since I was 16 for tacitly convinced fear that it will not hold up to the strength of the image it left on my mind, the image which took up with it the distant Alpscape of da Vinci's Saint Anne and something of the otherness imparted to the same painter's Rocks by the hanging monumental weights like those which would slowly lean and rushingly fall in the dream I had when I was four years old, where my life and my mother's and my Nana's, I can't recall the details, could not all be saved.

I'd like to reanimate these gods "who serenely / rise and at wells that we can only guess at / splash icy water on your necks and faces," even if only as hollow but out-shining set-pieces in my guignol exercise.

Rilke, in a letter, says something which I can avow to be utterly true, something which may radically alter the way I say “God” and “Catholic,” eventually, even soon, depending on what I need, what becomes necessary as I struggle in the fold of pursuit to find words.

“I began with Things, which were the true confidants of my lonely childhood, and it was already a great achievement that, without any outside help, I managed to get as far as animals. But then Russia opened itself to me and granted me the brotherliness and the darkness of God, in whom alone there is community. That was what I named him then, the God who had broken in upon me, and for a long time I lived in the antechamber of his name, on my knees. Now, you would hardly ever hear me name him; there is an indescribable discretion between us, and where nearness and penetration once were, new distances stretch forth, as in the atom, which the new science conceives of as a universe in miniature. The comprehensible slips away, is transformed; instead of possession one learns relationship [statt des Besitzes lernt man den Bezug], and there arises a namelessness that must begin once more in our relations with God if we are to be complete and without evasion. The experience of feeling him recedes behind an infinite delight in everything that can be felt; all attributes are taken away from God, who is no longer sayable, and fall back into creation, into love and death. It is perhaps only this that again and again took place in certain passages in the Book of Hours, this ascent of God out of the breathing heart-so that the sky was covered with him—, and his falling to earth as rain. But saying even that is already too much.”
(To Ilse Jahr, February 22, 1923)

On the rear cover of my decrepit gold-orange (my color words are pathetically elementary in comparison to their expectation. What I really mean would be “saffron” were it not for the from-within illumined gradation of the breast of the oriole, which makes “oriole” the only right word here) Berkley edition of Pale Fire, Mary McCarthy says “this merman of the deep” (after calling the book a “centaur-work of Nabokov, half poem, half prose”), and the phrase lodges deep, deep.

Encrusted with all the coralline lines--undersea, not maritime--that ornament Shakespeare’s Tempest (perhaps the most Mallarméan out of his plays for its ethereal sumptuosity, despite

Mallarmé's own greater use found for Hamlet), this figure, the merman, hybrid, athletic, regal, piscine (I mean ichthyc), gray or silver beyond the green, desirous in the warm cold blood beneath scales and in the limbs crevassed by salt dust,

Is Ludovic a merman? or is Nemo? Verne makes this latter move almost too easy.

I think of the day on a boat on Mission Bay, when my sex first felt it was itself. I dreamed "Apollo," I dreamed "Aphrodite," and I dreamed "Poseidon." There are cellic sound-strains these chords seesaw against that are deeper and truer than the obvious ludic hubris.

Here are some of Dulac's illustrations of The Tempest, which I found at the big Half Price in December.

Act V Scene I
Prospero. And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book

Act I Scene II
Miranda. O, the cry did knock
Against my very heart

Act I Scene II
Prospero. A rotten carcass of a butt, not rigg'd.
Nor tackle, sail, nor mast...

Act I Scene II
Prospero. Here in this island we arrived...

Act I Scene II
Ariel. Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes

And one for The Little Mermaid drawn by the same:

The Merman King had been for many years a widower, but his old mother kept house for him; she was a clever woman, but so proud of her noble birth that she wore twelve oysters on her tail, while the other grandees were only allowed six [I think I preserved the wrong caption].

Belle ville.
I set about drawing a picture, in ultrafine Sharpie on half a sheet of printer paper, of every picture in my camera roll since I moved to Los Angeles three hundred and eighty days ago. There are about eight thousand. Picasso once said that __. If this is the case, the __ they'd record would be the life of a draughtsman-painter's mind: A perception and a judgment and an optic nerve and a hand whose muscles are as alive with memory as they are with vigor.
Unlike Picasso, I do not think. I just live in monkish silence. [On 5 February 2025 I notice that something from what I was about to paste links up seamlessly with this: From Caputo, on Heidegger and Eckhart: "The work that man can do is not to will but to not-will, to prepare a clearing and opening in which being may come. This is not quietism but asceticism, the hard work of a kind of poverty of spirit." This Asceticism sounds like the way I imagine myself painting. A discipline and a habit, an athletic insistence on keeping form open.]

5 February 2025

I needed to get back to my reading of Hartman's reading of Rilke. My memory just stood on / in these glowing solid pillars of gestures or postures, and I wanted to retrieve and/or distill and/or etc.--or just to be guided by them.

What I am moved (perhaps guided) by, in real life, from that getting back, is this.

First: "The first is in "types culled from painting and sculpture, men and women whose life is summed up in a single sacramental gesture--gisants, those who kneel, those who humble themselves, those who have buried themselves in the earth, the pilgrims, and a weeper 'dem sich das Weinen in die Hände schlug (who had tears in his hands)' (76). … The culling of types, the synecdochal (sacramental) linking thus established, is precisely the operation of the gathered strange, and it is as well the vampiric homeless- / floating-sign image-work which is Monika Baer's pictorial language." In reading this I feel so close to being able to paint again.

Second: From Caputo, on Heidegger and Eckhart: "The work that man can do is not to will

but to not-will, to prepare a clearing and opening in which being may come. This is not quietism but asceticism, the hard work of a kind of poverty of spirit.”* This Asceticism sounds like the way I imagine myself painting. A discipline and a habit, an athletic insistence on keeping form open.
[* A longer inclusive quotation to situate this in the luminous stream of Eckhart-Rilke: “I noticed Rilke used the word gelassen (“Und sie ertrug es; trug bis obenhin / das Fliegende, Entfliehende, Entfernte, / das Ungeheuere, noch Ungelernte / gelassen wie die Wasserträgerin / den vollen Krug”); I’d been remembering this morning a rather conspicuous remark Caputo made, which stuck out for the oddness of applying the descriptors “oldest and most revered” to a vocable: “Instead of willing [“Heraclitus’s poletnos, which Heidegger liked to translate during the mid-thirties as Kampf (1M 61-2; GA 4066)”], Heidegger spoke of "letting be," using at this point the word Gelassenheit, one of the oldest and most revered parts of the vocabulary of the Rhineland mystics, in particular Meister Eckhart” (“Heidegger and Theology,” 281-282). He continues, riffing on the Eckhart resonance: “Being is not something that human thinking can conceive or "grasp" (be-greifen, con-capere) but something that thinking can only be "granted." Thoughts come to us; we do not think them up (PLT 6; GA 13 78). Thinking is a gift or a grace, an event that overtakes us, an address visited upon us. The role of human beings is not, however, one of utter passivity but one of cooperation with and remaining "open" to being's advent. The work that man can do is not to will but to not-will, to prepare a clearing and opening in which being may come. This is not quietism but asceticism, the hard work of a kind of poverty of spirit.””]

6 February 2025

Yesterday John sent “Call ASAP,” and I was horribly worried that I had said something undesired in what I wrote. But he just needed someone to come replace Tim Roth, an actor not quite famous but prolific, whose character roles include a few Tarantino films. Roth and Tuite were going to model various designers’ clothes--Bottega Veneta, Prada, Ferragamo, Balenciaga--in a shoot built around Roth’s “collective character” (a phrase I suggested, and which Danielle affirmed, while she was explaining what she was trying to do) for Marfa Journal.

I was nauseatingly excited to have a reason to leave my house which, if nonetheless equally frivolous, I had at least not had to invent on the spot myself.

Danielle, Danielle Neu, was the photographer, and she used exclusively a Hasselblad, whose easily-interchangeable cartridges of film needed to be reloaded almost constantly; this reloading was the sole duty of Alejandro, a “conceptual photographer” who knew Danielle from their shared darkroom.

I’ve forgotten the stylist’s name, but she was extremely kind. There was also Aaron (?), a very tall man with a very three-dimensional face, whose role might have been Danielle’s boyfriend--I don’t know.

The location was the New Hollywood Theater, a small but good-feeling (nostalgic? historic?) performance venue owned by Calla, a girl from Berlin who eventually arrived with her dog (Bert?) in her arms. She mentioned her “collaborator,” hesitating to use this word because,

as she explained, you can't in Berlin.

I emphatically thanked everyone at least once, but not profusely, and made sure to acknowledge to John that it seemed to me he'd really listened when I had mentioned him floating around bored all day (an inaccurate description of my present life which, I thought, might be the best way to convey at least certain true aspects of it).

I also mentioned aloud that the phonetic correspondence between Tim Roth and Tom Worth made this a funny little thing. People laughed and Danielle added on with something about "body double."

Photographs were taken of me in my own white shirt and jeans (both Will's), and in an outfit of woven leather shoes, beige trousers, a vampirical white shirt with an enormous popped collar, and a gray belted jacket which reminded me at first of David Byrne but which was more rounded and Italianate ("nothing Surrealistic" was the quotation from Roth, related mockingly to me, upon which he had left in a huff). All of these were Bottega Veneta, and I like to wear them because I've always thought, because of the skilled way in which images are taken, that this brand signs clothes with ingenious little uses of classic materials of sublime quality. I've never worn or touched them before, of course.

Many evocations elicited from John and Danielle, mostly between each other and about John, did not successfully conjure anything from my memory. This alone was already fun to watch: people with a rich bank of references that mine hardly overlaps, packed with images that translate in some esoteric but real way into perceptible but barely traceable nuances of the posing of his face and body.

"Matt Damon--I mean, Matt Dillon--Rumble Fish" was what Danielle said to me while taking my pictures in a white shirt. I did have a very vague idea of this one's denotation, but all I could make of it was that it might either be consolation-flattery (if I'd not performed what they called me hoping I might) or simply inspired by the very idea of youth (they were as surprised at my age as at any of the other strange little things I said).

On 12 January 2025 I purchased admission to the Cecily Brown exhibition at the Dallas Museum of Art. My phone had died and become a harmless compact of glass and metal. I was unable to find out what sort of thing I was getting into before buying the ticket, which my mother, before leaving the museum, had insisted I do with her credit card.

I didn't like the paintings, not at all, and I was twisted into a disgusted knot at the thought that my mom had paid to get me into these two-and-a-half rooms full of eight-figure drivel. My face became hot as, before my eyes, I watched myself move out of the gallery, walk to the woman from whom I'd bought the ticket fifteen minutes prior, and ask her, as politely and cluelessly as I could manage, whether tickets were refundable, since "it wasn't what I thought it would be"; I hoped she'd interpret this to mean that I had thought I was paying for admission to the museum, or that I was in some way puritanically opposed to the sexually implicit content, or that I couldn't understand abstract-aping painting. Quite surprised, she kindly obliged, and I left the building with the strangest mixture of relief and guilt.

In the Dallas Museum of Art on 12 January 2025, I was surprised at what I saw when I looked at the portrait of Natalia Zakharovna Kolycheva, née Hitrovo, painted in 1799. It nestled strangely amid what I knew of Russian Francophilia (the play she reads is French), such as it is treated in works like Dostoevsky's, because I didn't know how this interest preceded the restoration. This might be explained with the fact that the painter, Elisabeth Louise Vigée-Lebrun, was the sort of person who had to flee the Revolution.

Look at this portrait of Gogol, too.

In January I was walking in the neighborhood that surrounds Stovall Park. I saw a distant black cat on the other side of the small road and I was overcome with the sensation familiar from the day of the walk with the crows and the Bronson Caves. I kept walking until I'd drawn near to it; it waited for me, it seemed, and then began to cross to my side of the road. Before it could complete this crossing I made an about-face. It took me no time at all to decide to do this.

At the end of this evening, some twelve hours later, my parents called Lauren and me, who were in Lauren's car. My mom told the story of pool-pump-sparked fire in the pile of leaves, which quickly filled the shed and the attic (the latter through a vent) with smoke, and blazed up a chunk of the fence immediately outside Nana's very recently vacated room. As an absurd quantity of firefighters arrived, my mother stood stunned in front of the house, clutching her sister's wedding dress. It was anyone's guess, at that moment, whether the fire had spread or would spread into the house's flammable upper region. It was my mother's decisive operation of the water hose, after a brief panic involving a plastic pitcher and then the spigot, which can be determined to have prevented that purely material but devastatingly material loss.

At Mathieu Malouf's The Dream at Gaga / Reena Spaulings, the guestbook said "Michael Cera." I loved these paintings. Maybe because I like seeing my reflection out in the world. The thrill of the tiniest fragment of the mania of the boy in Nabokov's "Signs and Symbols" (his title, not the one the New Yorker editor published it under in 1949, "Symbols and Signs").

Tamo Jugeli's were as splendid as I thought they'd be.

While I looked at them, overwhelmed at the sheer force of optimism that they not only enshrine but also viscerally transmit, I thought of how it was that that spirit had become material (which is a more precise, but rather dry and clinical, way of saying, I wondered how she'd done it). The palette is one thing; that palette goes a very long way. It's a hard one to describe. Imagine the juiciest de Kooning's primaries get, with an additional stained-glass brightness of Sam Francis or the Paris tachistes, their kitsch subtracted. Maybe Joan Mitchell is the best comparison, actually, but again, there's something more visceral in Jugeli, in the richness of her colors.

But then there's something else, which I can't quite wrap my head all the way around. The word "process" still stands in my mind, in all its tiredness and insufficiency. Better: I think of Matisse and Hantaï, Hantaï's Matisse; and not only the "couper dans la couleur" / arche-drawing germs of ideas for which Matisse may already have been immortal, but also this correspondance: That Duthuit said of Matisse "____" (I can't retrieve the quote now but it's about painting with him; I think Bois might have quoted it, somewhere, maybe in the essay "The Blinding: For Leo Steinberg"?)*, and that Nancy said of Hantaï, lastly, "You have to paint with him in order not to finish." And--the thing is--I think that there is contained in here the very kernel of the matter of why painting is truly a medium par excellence, why Painting is worthy of a life's entire dedication, and why, among many other things, it is the prime opposing force to the digital (and to Control more broadly), whose fundamental pernicious aspect is to numb the active sense, to de-participate you from the love that is the world.

[* Added 8 February 2025: I dug harder, and this is what I found that seems most likely to be what I was trying to remember: A note from 23 February 2023, from a 2010 Jean-Luc Nancy lecture titled "Sacred Art." "... he began to talk about how participation in the material (and in the sense) of art is absolutely essential to the experience of it–in this talk, he said that the viewer

has to reproduce in some sense the gesture of Leonardo in order for art's operation to transpire. It's almost the same formulation as the last line of his 2022 contribution to FLV Hantaï: (from memory, so, roughly,) "you have to paint with him in order not to finish." I of course think back to some of the first stirrings I felt in relation to paintings, probably at the Kimbell; they were such things as Matisses and Modiglianis and Bonnards–things where the canvas is overflowing with painterly gestures open to the viewer for joining into them, fully-ripe juice-full with these gestures that sustain every ounce of wonder at the singularity of the way color and line reach inexplicable and immeasurable accords (I am thinking of "L'Asie") and yet I felt on looking at the painting that I could do it too, that I was doing it too. And, linked up to the below, that sits right with the distinguishing feature of art that he sticks to: In order for mystery to be put into material form, to be brought right up to sense, to be drawn out by the artist into a sensible-for-the-viewer state, of course it makes sense that this is done best when the painter is able to arrange the situation such that the viewer feels that they (can be / could be /) are painting the painting with their own haptic-eye-hand-body-mind-soul."]
I was thrilled to see that they had printed images of one of Jugeli's paintings on large, thin sheets of paper. Their colors and some half-level of specifics of the kinds of ways the brush moved, if not the paintings' bodily force, now fill a corner of my room.
I'm always overwhelmed at Karma. The floor there is simply so high.
And Reggie Burrows Hodges made me say: "Sentiment of direct correspondance to Austerlitz. / The tunnel vision claustrophobia like someone weaned on anamorphic suddenly constricted to spherical format: But really, it just draws you closer to compensate; once you get up where it asks you to be, that's when you can finally get in tune with the eyelash-size filament of pink in the glass in "Navy Days (Berlin)" (really, it is that small). / I took pictures of some favorites. / Triomphe (Paris) almost made me think for a second that he'd seen Stutz's show: In that imaginary timeline where he had, what an image of the casting of a spell."

It occurs to me that Pale Fire is, probably much more than Bruges-la-morte, the consummate Symbolist novel. This is to say that Symbolism is much more a matter of crystalline superposition and the establishment of aesthetic necessity by means of interlocking convergent contingencies than of suggestive vagueness for its own sake. Or maybe I am speaking of re-Symbolism.

In any case, Nabokov confirmed this budding thought of mine (I have it in cumulative waves every night, I read Pale Fire after Bella falls asleep) when he said of his "Signs and Symbols" that it is a story with another (bigger? more vague?) story woven into it. Superposition itself.

This webpage titled "mediocre mermaid in Lolita; Merman in Pale Fire" is a masterpiece of paranoid reading, the sort I often practice in my own dandyish (dilettantish?) way keyed to reproductions of paintings, the sort that one must work through in order to all of a moment transcend, in order to really read a (re-)Symbolist work of art like those of Mallarmé and Nabokov (and, maybe, Jasper Johns).

7 February 2025

I said yesterday that I was “always overwhelmed at Karma. The floor there is simply so high”--and it’s Manoucher Yektai, Verne Dawson, Andrew Cranston, Maja Ruznic, Ulala Imai, and Ryan Preciado, on top of Jugeli and Hodges, with Jonas Wood now kind of in the background, that made me say that. They just don’t seem to miss like Gagosian and Zwirner are prone to do, and no one in America but these three and Matthew Marks have a share of the very very best.

The artists I praise here are those that I bring into the picture when, at the end of my last note yesterday, I say “(and, maybe, Jasper Johns).”

Diagram for espresso cup.

[The text that spills off to the right is contained in this document.]
The thought is that each night--the space spanning the endpoints of each horizontal line in this diagram--could be a dissolution of self, and the centerpoint of each horizontal line would be a concentration of self into an utterance, a finely-wrought multifariously-determined work (which, in turn, becomes prismatic, but which, in its own becoming-into-being, is the momentary concentration of as much as possible of the kaleidoscopic out-refractions of the prismatic self).

The space around the endpoints is the sleep; the loss of self in these cases is the state of falling asleep (more or less literally--perhaps it ought to be rather literal at first) in water, which is also sacramental (it is, in every case, baptism; a Catholic sacrament is the deepest possible gesture (I say “gesture” because it is a movement of the person, the body-mind, only visible in the body and yet involving all of the body and therefore also all of the mind because, while not reducible to the body, the mind is nowhere disconnected from the body)).

The centerpoints of the lines, the concentrations into “an utterance,” are not just the letters but also works of art in any medium, as long as they are in some medium (meaning: legible). So, for example, a painting can attain to the same “utterance” status as one of the letters; as can a little gemlike set-piece like the Samouraï example here (that’s what is clipped in the blue; which I describe thus: “On this day, the letter arrives as a prop in a Neo-noir sequence whose postures, events, facial expressions, shot-framings, will all be lifted from that Delon-Melville in a manner which I now realize is similar to what Kan-Sperling did for Heavy Traffic. Nevertheless: At a certain point Delon will scrawl a note; it won't be clear at first what he's written, but it will turn

out that it was the latest in the series of Ludovic Nemo's notes.").

These are the only moments (and all the moments) when the self is interpretable as unified, harmonic, & total. So, really, one could better picture each horizontal line as a braid of sorts, of two-ish strands; the distinguishable strands are the perceptibly-disconnected separable constituent components of the self (all the disconnects prove them), here represented by the duality (plurality) of Ludovic and Nemo; they converge (fully and precisely) only at the very center, where they become one, Ludovic Nemo (the name of the "author" or "artist" par excellence--the only sort of "construction" of "unified self" I can avow. Meanwhile I always avow the notion of "person" as that toward which the only possible posture is adoration; thus "person" must necessarily be kept excruciatingly open as a concept, extremely generous in the plotting of its bounds. I'm a person even when I am asleep, even when I am incoherent, even when I despair, even when I am abjected, Controlled, etc., whereas in all of these cases I am not capable of real self-gathering utterances (capable of uttering prismatic art-objects)).

Perhaps the best way to write the edge-of-line sleep-in-water portions is to write them in Fosse's soporific dream sentences, basic, long, spare, perhaps redoubling in doubt, open to a dream logic, but exuding simplicity, as though the barest simplest possible transcription of material-tending phenomenon of the immersion in question (making my point-of-view as close as I can get it to "objective," reduced as close to mindless body as possible). Here is how, in these moments, the Fosse oneiric-voice allows the "braid" to fray into Ludovic, and Nemo, and (therefrom) into an uncountable haze of different "I": This dream plane is where everything I think of as "my memories" exists "at once," "side by side," with a connector-logic (nebeneinander), not a sequence-logic (nacheinander). So I can freely float, while narrating in these parts, from one immersion-site (one bath, one spa-town, one baptism, one ocean) to any other, and call "myself" (whenever "I" must be called) at each moment variously "Ludovic" or "Nemo" or "Ludovic or Nemo" or even "Tom" or "Thomas" or "twin" or "Paul" or "doubter" or "lover" or any of the other masks (puppets, fards) I've ever sparked.

Meanwhile the things I can avow as "letters"--the paintings or stories or whatever utterances convene a harmonic, unified "Ludovic Nemo"--ought to be as multiply-determined, as positively Nabokov-Mallarmé-encrusted with as many transposed intricacies, as many superposed planes of action and registers of significance as possible (because this is precisely where the Eucharist-boulanger dynamic of all-affects-all is most acutely in effect: this, that is, is the aesthetic site). And if I need pictures of who does this: It's that body of Ludovic Nemo who holds the paints, who stands before the panel; it's a boxer (I choose this figure among the several athlete-figures who mean much to me; maybe I'd choose the swimmer, but then I'd really be crossing my wires) whose body's-and-point-of-view's entire history was always just a handful of intersecting lines of action and trains of thought whose every specificity (every decision--it would be fun to enumerate them, but I'd need a stand-in to source the textures of the homes and the meals and the training sessions and the childhoods and the relationships and the ideologies and the visions and the desires and the fixations and all the breathing and the becoming-calm and the final becoming-ready) was keyed exclusively to this moment, to put the body-and-point-of-view into the state of perfection-upon-entering-the-ring, to win.

(Problemata emerge, loose ends which do not, I think, necessitate a rewriting of the schema above. There is the obvious unattainability of harmonically unified "Ludovic Nemo" author status for every moment at which my general "I" would really have to take up paints, and work.* But maybe the usefulness of the showing of the true motion (the "music," the putting into motion

of these difficult-to-even-image things, as in Sein und Zeit pt. 2) of how real persons make real beauty and thereby really make life livable, showing that motion truly in an oscillatory work like this, outweighs the possible misconstrual that I'm theorizing something impossible here (i.e. the misconstrual that the painter or the boxer is some superman that I'm either perversely arrogant to aspire to, or ironically depicting). [* For another strange, but important, example to illustrate this tension: One's most unified, most concentrated, most central all-in-one moment of selfhood is the act of love; but this is also, famously, the moment of the complete loss of self, the complete dissolving of self into--into what? Into ecstasy? Into the abstract "You" of agapic Love? There are choice others who have put this into words worth retaining])

Perhaps this is a good list for the "letters" column (the central column, the avatars for "Ludovic Nemo," for authorship, for concentration of being into singular (in the sense of consummately specific) acts of inscription-into-materiality:

[0.: The existing Proscenium, Ludovic Nemo penning a letter, seated with his back to the armoire?]

1. The painter, as I paint, now, with this Klimt-blumengarten hanging on my wall (as it has for the whole duration in which I came to understand it in this way) (I think I ought to reserve a consideration that the painter-figure should maybe not be among this list-of-twenty at all)
2. The boxer (Should he, and all of these, be named "Ludovic Nemo" too? Maybe when he finally does enter the wring, that is when he writes the second letter, and after the letter it is a matter of lifting the belt (should this be a moment of comic exaggeration?), retreating to dissolution in some bath or other.
3. Rilke, maybe, the image of him writing his elegies or sonnets, that outpouring of creativity; I don't want to stage it in that Thurn-und-Taxis Gothic setting, but still, I think, Rilke's own evocations of his conditions of writing would probably be good to appropriate. Maybe he warms up with drafts that are real Rilke fragments, but when he finally sets his finally-luminous pen to the paper, what comes out is the third letter. And I think he is still named Ludovic Nemo, and he is still writing to Belle.
4. Perhaps this is the right sequencing: Now comes the Delon-Melville moment, the neo-noir predicament, clearly formulaic, clearly imaginative, clearly a proxy, making clear the mythic character of the plane where all twenty of these letter-writings converge (where all twenty really make sense together, i.e. they only really all belong together on this imaginative plane).
5. How many figures for authorship are there? Perhaps I really need to assemble them all and to name each, in turn, Ludovic Nemo. Each time, bringing up just what from the notion of each means so much to me, what it is that comes back to me when again and again each of these comes back to me. And will it grow tiresome that each, at the climactic moment, just pens another of my (banal, but do they come off that way? Do they come off adequately or serviceably in any way at all?) letters to "Belle." Maybe it's growing tiresome; but maybe, here, I start listing them, knowing that, from this point, they really might not stick, the exercise might begin to feel too tryingly Modernist, like Beckett's lesser works or like the long chapters in mid-late Ulysses that just drag on. If that's the case, reconsider this; but, if not: Rabelais.
6. Hantaï.
7. Cavalcanti.
8. Mallarmé.
9. Reverdy when he coined his definition of "image": And here, perhaps, the "author" is actually Reverdy-Breton-Schuster-Hantaï.

10. Jasper Johns as ur-re-Symbolist--that is, Jasper Johns as described by Sean Tatol?
11. Just any of the Troubadours?
12. Pound
13. Balthus
14. The Sicilian poet court
15. Any of my paradiso terrestre contemporary painters? Any, or several at once for purposes of disguise?
16. Pontormo with his diet, journal, and work on the eventually-flooded chapel? Or is he at work on the Visitation, and do I use Nancy's "Visitation" as a projection-lens furnishing much of the necessary wording to show what Pontormo was really up to (and do I take the necessary time, here, to set up the Vasarian "transalpine" intrigue and inaugurate a certain stretch of revisionist painting history here)?
17. If the answer to the last question above is "yes," then: Grünewald
18. [Insert anyone else I feel is indispensable to a "transalpine" arc if that's what I think should happen here]
19. Jan van Eyck
20. In no particular order (only some of the above was in any particular order): Nabokov weaving one story into another, and Nabokov making his centaur-work, his "merman," with its ultimately-convergent but for long rhizomatically-told (i.e. footnote-structured) encrusted crystalline object in literary form;
21. maybe even Saoirse Bertram or Tao Lin, with their respective means of excruciation (Bertram the tearing abstraction, Lin the drugs and ennui and everything from 2013 that in 2018 he was recovering from) and their respective crystalline instant-condensations of either cold-air clarity (Bertram) or twinkling beauty (Lin);
22. Bernard himself? Or anyone important (Cézanne, Gauguin, Bernard, Bonnard, Matisse, any of my dear Picassos (the Cubist, the one in Antibes, or the one in the garret painting Boy with pipe), etc. (esp. if I am engaging a revision of history of la Peinture from a "transalpine" angle) from what T.J. Clark called "french painting": "the line from Corot to Matisse, from Sardanapalus to Ma Jolie"? I lean toward "no": I don't really have any specific bone to pick right now in any of these stories of or moments from "Modernism" as such
23. There are countless who I simply haven't named. Pantheonization is tiresome and always seems to run the risk of embarrassment or uselessness or both

8 February 2025

This is what a loss looks like, I say to Bella as I look at the side of my milky, membranous hand as seen fuzzily through my razor-thin martini glass, fogged-up and freezing, the last of its kind--we're out of vermouth, and I have no money with which to buy more.
I had told her, two days ago, that I had a great feeling about this night. Then--what kismet--I'd

seen Arty Nelson walking his two little dogs in Bronson Canyon.
But this is what a loss looks like. I spoke not a single word at the first opening, surrounded by the terrible sense of one hundred-odd copies of Will, male and female, wearing thick beards and wide stiff A.P.C. pants or cigarettes tucked into curly mops of hair. And the second was a little crime of miscommunication. I ought to bring Tiffany's Door a small case of Budweiser to apologize.
And now, full of sadness, I cannot act out the thin and homogeneous contents of mon triste cerveau like the actor-director melodramaturge I really am. Instead, I can be a pierrot, at best: making a fool of myself as I carry myself through the motions of fun love, "irregardless" of the dynamics between the mask (the fard) and what underlies it.
"But art, real art, happens behind closed doors, in the company of the few, or, in the very best way, in solitude, where one's own persona is abstracted and too far to fear, too far to impinge upon the untautening of the habitual constitution. Some art aids in this dissolution, prompts you to it; all art waits, more or less patiently, until the organism untenses, the interstices appear, and the mist moves in, interpermeates, works its way from all among."
This I write to console my inability to swim among the fish under that incandescent glare. I write it in imagination of what I might yet say for McHenry's clowns, anyway.

9 February 2025

And if I dare speak into form that avatar mine, dare I also impute to him traits of body I hold tenderly in the mind: Anything I assembled in images with long coats, scarves, postures? Or the bird-shouldered image from that Krohn story: "People often mistook his difference for a superior intellect and would clap him on the back, only to quickly recoil, feeling how sharp and thin he was under his sweater. / My boyfriend's face was carved with the sangfroid of a street vendor slicing peppers with a penknife, letting the pieces drop and fry in the dirty hot oil. My boyfriend struggled to open jars and pick up credit cards from the floor." Or again the bird-shouldered image from one of Joyce's pennyeach pomes, "On the Beach at Fontana": "From whining wind and colder / Grey sea I wrap him warm / And touch his trembling fineboned shoulder / And boyish arm." (The next (the last) stanza of the same implicates too another defining trait of mine, my everpresent almost-overwhelming sense of fear: "Around us fear, descending / Darkness of fear above / And in my heart how deep unending / Ache of love!" I can't help adding more, from another work in the same volume, "Tutto è Sciolto": Again fear grips the "I" and it is, again, me, in certain alternatives ("universes") my conduct with Bella went this way: "The clear young eyes' soft look, the candid brow, / The fragrant hair, / Falling as through the silence falleth now / Dusk of the air. [A simile of falling, in a way alike to the one of descending in "Fontana"; I'd do well to supplement all my images of "mist," which "pervades," with similes like these two (too).] // Why then, remembering those shy / Sweet lures, repine / When the dear love she yielded with a sigh / Was all but thine?" And even more. "Simples" for its epigram and the intensity contained in this prayer: "Be mine, I pray, a waxen ear / To shield me from her childish croon / And mine a shielded heart for her / Who gathers simples of the moon." (This is the one he

opened with an epigram “O bella bionda, / Sei come l’onda!”) And, lastly, “She Weeps over Rahoon” for its “Danny Boy” grief, the most beautiful kind (posture) I’ve always held as the only way I know to think of grief: “Rain on Rahoon falls softly, softly falling, / Where my dark lover lies. / Sad is his voice that calls me, sadly calling, / At grey moonrise. // Love, hear thou / How soft, how sad his voice is ever calling, / Ever unanswered and the dark rain falling, / Then as now. // Dark too our hearts, O love, shall lie and cold / As his sad heart has lain / Under the moongrey nettles, the black mould / And muttering rain.” (This last nature morte, the moongrey nettles and the black mould and the muttering rain (all over sad dark heart): They remind me, in texture, of Saoirse Bertram.)

I’m dense, I’m clogged, reading all at once my Heidegger-precising reading of Hartman’s chapter on Rilke, Bois’s very long essay developing “the Matisse system” titled “On Matisse: The Blinding: For Leo Steinberg,” still Ulysses with renewed purpose to enliven Dublin before I arrive there, still Kracht and Pale Fire, and now Bolaño’s 2666 (found in the Bronson Canyon book cabinet when Arty Nelson walked by me) which is fantastically invigorating.

Ok! I’ll get there eventually, and it won’t be too hard.

Joyce’s poems are gorgeous and will always be; they’re like the best of A Quinzaine for This Yule, and also they share Nabokov’s relation to Shakespeare I think. (See Chamber Music “III,” which ends “Play on, invisible harps, unto Love, / Whose way in heaven is aglow / At that hour when soft lights come and go, / Soft sweet music in the air above / And in the earth below.”)

And I’ll shelve 2666 for long, now.

So just these two shorter readings, Hartman and Bois, today; I’ll keep chipping away on Kracht and Nabokov nights and Ulysses walks; and that will be that, I think. (This is not really satisfying. I feel I’m still awaiting direction. What I’m really awaiting is the moment when I read all my notes since October-ish, the ones I have not yet ever read; and this will be the flood that fills up my frame for my oscillatory writing to the point where carrying it through to “completion” is just a matter of an indeterminate stretch of plugging on.)

But--Septology and La recherche!

Though I may feel far removed, right now, from my notionally ongoing but so-long dust-laden project of gathering the strange, as a conscience-endowed painter I cannot forego the recording of these faces on an odd and overlooked corner of the cover of my Grünewald:

In the past, I think I'd never looked past the strangeness of the largest angel (potent enough to hold the gaze), sawing backhand on her gorgeous instrument.

Bella asked me if I feel like Tom Ripley, she being Cate Blanchett, Joseph Geagan is Gwyneth Paltrow, and so forth. Indeed: saying "yes" and then figuring out how.

I met Joseph, and Georgia Gardner Gray and another lady named Jasmine, yesterday in the back office of Regen Projects. My head was spinning from the thought of the centrality of the axis plotted out by the names attached to Regen--Tillmans, Barney, Graham, Pettibon, Kapoor, Prince, Ligon, Auerbach, Trecartin,--as though someone had their fingers up to a very tall column of blocks very low on a Jenga tower. (Gardner Gray herself owns a list that causes just as much vertigo: Sadie Coles, Croy Nielsen, Francis Irv, Capitain Petzel, Clearing, LOMEX, the Whitney and Reena Spaulings, on top of Regen.) I had to cross my legs a certain way and focus on breathing very slowly to mitigate the little uncontrollable tremors I was getting while reading over my lines, the same ones I get anytime I'm remotely nervous, which even the most notional anticipation of "performance" can induce.

Notional here, because John had texted me shortly before this "casting call" started, I'd responded when it was a third of the way through, I told him I'm too shy when it comes to any kind of performance, I showed up anyway, I read the scripts, I quickly realized which character I need only read, John stepped out to call someone else back, I reached awkwardly to shake his hand while he initiated a hug, we hugged, he told me to just read the lines for the character that had already made it make perfect sense why he'd texted me: An Amish simpleton, romantic and Romantic.

I was reading calmly at first, they were laughing politely and not certainly on purpose when I did certain things with my voice, I kept being able to control my voice well even when my leg started bouncing about two-thirds through. They told me to stay until the end to try me alongside a candidate for the character I'd be alongside, if chosen. They seemed to retain at least two candidates for hers, and only one (me) for mine, even though she, Sydney, was immeasurably more capable and committed than me.

I stand to make five hundred dollars and at least three or four friends.

[On 10 February 2025 I add: If they cast me it is surely for this reason, that I hope to be able to avow: That I attend my religious service with unimpeachable regularity; and that I work with my hands. [A truth so nominal as to be for all purposes a lie.] (And if asked: I paint; and, while the painting does not buy my bread, I bake [This lie I had hoped, and felt completely certain, would be true by the time it needed to be. It is not].)]

10 February 2025

Early in his Matisse / Steinberg / Blinding essay, Bois plots out a loaded cast which seems likely to span (preliminarily) the whole. The terms here are both uncomfortably near and gloriously reassuringly near to the ones I made myself at home in earlier this year, in April-ish.
“All three metaphors (the stone in the water, the circulatory system, infla-tion) not only characterize Matisse's painting as an art of surfaces; they also introduce a sense of dynamism (which makes it possible to understand the artist's frequent references to the notions of accord and harmony as "an equilibrium of forces"). Above all, the three terms to which these metaphors refer (expansion, circulation, and tension) form a system: it is the "tennis racket" tautness of his canvases that prevents the eye from penetrating and coming to a standstill in them; reciprocally, it is the insistent "keep moving, keep moving!" to which the eye is subject that organizes the pneumatic tension (the arabesque is "the impassioned impulse [élan] that swells these drawings," as the painter says of cave painting, and we shall see that the dance of colors plays just as significant a role here); finally, it is the combined action of the rebound and the swirl that gives rise to the centrifugal force of Matisse's painting.”

A bit further on, something comes up in a Matisse memory quoted and examined by Bois which confirms a basic tenet of re-Symbolist painting, but also invites reflection on its consequence. The basic tenet is that it cannot be taken a priori that art which represents (anything) truly is, just for that, good: There is no axiom about an inherent value for art’s faithfulness to nature. The reflection invited is: Once a painting is seen in its true light as pastes arranged on a flat surface, where, then, do we seek to trace its goodness? The answer leads down a handful of paths that I trace recursively, at immense length. These paths are named (at random) Love, beauty in the (tennis-racket) tautness of the charged* activity of the plane, and faithfulness to the terms of one’s own search (acuity in the fold of pursuit, à la Herrigel, Alzate, and of course Jasper Johns etc.) [* the charge can be sought in geometry itself, as in Mondrian; or in an erotism-enlivened mirror-play; or in ghosts from the mists of the past, as in Pound or the gathered strange (and that is where the gathered strange comes in; because failure is almost certain if one takes a tack that counts on the possibility of eliding tradition (eliding memory, that is).] “‘[Renoir] was surprised to see that the dark tone didn't leap out, but stayed at the distance indicated by its position in the room. He had me move the canvas further away from him, and said, "How do you do that? If I used a black like that in a painting, it would jump out at you." I couldn't come up with an explanation straight away, and yet the explanation is very simple: it comes from a combination of forces in the canvas, which is what my generation has contributed. I think it also comes from the feeling of space that I always get when standing before my models, and which even brings me to put myself in this space. It is constructed with an ensemble of forces that has nothing to do with a direct copy of nature.’ / The essential point here, of course, is the one concerning "what my generation has contributed": the combination of forces that sutures the surface of the canvas into an inviolable totality, and to which the pages that follow are largely

devoted."

I also want to spend a moment on something else glancingly appearing in Matisse's words: "I think it also comes from the feeling of space that I always get when standing before my models, and which even brings me to put myself in this space." In the analytic of Love in painting, the relation of painter to model is by no means abstracted from the situation in the same motion that de-privileges the faithful representation of nature. It is a site worthy of permanently ongoing interest, not least through Matisse's own work.

I wish I could get more purchase (some kind of formula or schema, at least to start with) on what Bois means by "Matisse's conception of memory and the unconscious is Proustian, not Freudian" here. Nevertheless, he furnishes an invaluable point of reference as that search (the one I regularly and often refer to--the one for "what never fails to bring me to tears"--the quest for Proust's relation of memory to art, a quest inseparable from my own search for the redemptive coincidence of art and Love) continues: "It takes time to absorb the atmosphere of a place, to be able to condense all the impressions it provides, which once again are in no way exclusively visual, Matisse's prodigious memory has often struck observers. But it wasn't just visual, it was synesthetic: "Whenever someone speaks of one of my pictures, even an old one, in calling to mind some of its features, without being able to remember the year I did it, I see very precisely the state of mind I was in when I made it." What he sees, the "reality" of his vision, what he wanted to render in his painting is not of a visual, but of a sentimental, an emotional nature, the expression of which he pursues "above all." Matisse's conception of memory and the unconscious is Proustian, not Freudian: "The unconscious enrichment of the artist is accomplished by all he sees, which he translates pictorially without thinking about it. An acacia on Vésubie, its movement, its svelte grace, led me perhaps to imagine the body of a dancing woman.""

Immediately afterward, as Bois continues, the site stays just as maddeningly central, even while the substance in his summoning of these jalons (first Proust and Freud, now Baudelaire and Mallarmé) becomes no less slippery: "One could go on endlessly quoting remarks attesting to Matisse's polysensoriality, and pointing out its effect on his work. One could attribute all the remarks in question to a Baudelairean aesthetic and discuss the function of metaphor in his painting, but I think this would be a mistake. If there is a connection between Matisse and Symbolism, it would more likely be found in the vicinity of Mallarmé-like the poet, he wanted "to depict not the thing itself, but the effect it produces." Since the "thing" can only really be captured when one is not looking at it, and since the goal is to condense in the painting all his sensations (odors, atmosphere, etc.), Matisse proposes a visual equivalent of this sensorial diffraction. Rather than close the universe of the visible in on itself and the spectator, as he had tried to do in the limit-drawing of 1904, rather than concentrating his vision and presenting a meticulous analysis of "exactly what he sees," and forcing us as spectators into a specular identification that would amount to an act of faith (short of returning to the tired devices of monocular perspective, which would hardly excite him, The Windshield (Route de Villacoublay) notwithstanding), Matisse does precisely the opposite: he renders the diffusion of his gaze, places the periphery in the center of his painting, and, above all, he makes it impossible for our eye to come to rest, to settle in one spot. He teaches us not to look, that is, to really see; he sets out to blind us, to anagrammatize the visual, to work below the threshold of perception and move into the subliminal."

Whenever I speak of "Painting as a medium par excellence" or "la Peinture" or "flat

surfaces and pastes on them," I mean this, these conditions, these conventions, these assumptions, these framings, among just a couple other things (that I'd also, and variously have, put under the heading of "Fried / Bois attention" and "opticality"). "'This human sentiment is possible in a picture—a picture is like a book—its interest doesn't overwhelm the spectator, who has to reach out to it; and its site is not fixed in advance.' The metaphor of the picture as a book intrigues Romm, and he asks Matisse to be more precise: 'It is an image. Like the book on the shelf in a bookcase, showing only the few words of its title, it needs, in order to give up its riches, the action of the reader who must pick it up, open it, and shut himself away with it- similarly, the picture enclosed in its frame and forming along with other paintings an ensemble on the wall of an apartment or a museum, cannot be penetrated unless the attention of the viewer is specially concentrated on it. In both cases, to be appreciated, the object has to be isolated from its milieu (contrary to architectural painting). This is what I meant when I wrote that the spectator has to "reach out" to the picture; to be more precise, I should have written "go in search of."'"

Does Matisse, having so carefully removed the mirror, turn straight to the lamp, elevate the lamp to the status of his primum mobile? If so, I'm farther from him than I thought; these are his words: "For me, expression does not reside in passions glowing in a human face or manifested by violent movement. The entire arrangement of my picture is expressive: the place occupied by the figures, the empty spaces around them, the proportions, everything has its share. Composition is the art of arranging in a decorative manner the diverse elements at the painter's command to express his feelings. In a picture every part will be visible and will play its appointed role, whether principal or secondary."

Mark the difference between the way that Nabokov's Charles speaks of boys and that image Murnane gave, fleetingly, of non-interchangeability:
Mark that, whatever prismatic source-locus the truth about my Love may be projected from, the line it casts, I am certain, falls between these two.

If anyone suspect of my “l’allure” that it be an adoration of anything but the beautiful its very self, let it then be known that there is no king I would hesitate to uncrown, by whatever means might convene, gentle lift or guillotine. It is in Baudelaire [him who imagined an aristocracy whose investiture pertained in no way to turf, pertained to no material but pure aesthesis, but Quality, but the beautiful], mon semblable, mon frère, that I own to this regicide vow.

Thinking of Grotjahn:
This morning I happened on the press release for an exhibition of his at Karma, Skulls 2016-2023. It mentioned that the artist had painted while “recovering from a massive blood clot in his leg and clots in both of his lungs at his home in Los Angeles in 2019. A backcountry skier who has spent the last few years widely exploring the mountain ranges of rural Colorado, Grotjahn regularly isolates himself completely in inhospitable terrains.”
The same press release recalled a comment (not particularly partaking of these notions’ illustrious and worthwhile histories, but nonetheless activating them, at least inside my skull) about body and mind, a comment which sounds familiar to me, though I know not from where: “The artist recently noted that he has ‘to remember that I am a body,’ not only a mind.”
The desire for an athleticism like his skiing as narrated on that backcountry podcast—I’ve imagined any number of substitutes, from swimming to Brazilian jiu-jitsu, but they are just that, substitutes—is never long out of my mind and never far from it. If I midwifed every day the transformation du boulanger, with the knowledge in the arms and the muscles in the back, I’d be a step closer, a step precious no matter how slight.

Is it in that Bois essay that was said “post-post-Impressionism”? If so, then that is the site, the open terminus, the open wound, at the far end of Clark’s “French painting” (hantai’s La peinture, maybe) that my great project will be to fuse it with the love-memory-person-point-of-view analytic of Reverdy (et al), and Proust, and Pound (and all that he so helpfully made shine together: Cavalcanti and the troubadours and I add the Sicilians), and Rilke, and Heidegger. Here’s how. I’ll show, with Bois, that where Matisse ends up is where Mondrian was too; that this is the real achievement, in painting, of Symbolism (in poetry and painting, but mostly in Mallarmé and Baudelaire); that threads were dropped, lost, but never cauterized, and that this is why a re-Symbolism is possible and so tantalizingly so; and that from this bleeding site it is finally time to put answers to all those questions, make visible and real and possible the life that can be lived in those answers, and it so happens that this life is also the very (Bartlebyian) “resistance” in which (at least in this if in nothing else) Deleuze and Agamben and Nancy and Debord (and others besides; the fellow travelers are too many to count, but you know who they are) are univocal.

I cannot believe the freedom of imagination in these Picasso etchings, primarily the Raphael and the Fornarina suite, based on this Ingres painting, to which I was alerted by a Karma poster from 2016 for the exhibition Olympia in Paris in collaboration with Patrick Seguin named in honor with the illicit- and obscenity-obsessed original publisher of Lolita as well as for the Fleurs du Mal incarnate by Manet. I am really frankly shocked.

This last one has a title which prompts reflection fit for a small (or great) mystery or riddle or allegory: Amorous Couple: Rapahel and the Fornarina, End, from 347 Suite.

He reflected equally graphically on the same painter's Bain turc.

And how far he's come from the rose saltimbanques favored by Rilke to this Female Acrobat with Face Makeup and Spectators, from 347 Suite.

This Exchange of glances sits nicely with my still life on a postcard from Antibes.

And what a frank and frontal faun, forward-pointing like my Greek-drawing self in the mirror in 2023.

Remember that, all along, he was this eerie “seated old man.”

Perhaps Aldo Crommelynck, master printmaker who (with his brother Piero) made 750 prints with Picasso in Mougins, is as essential to my image of Ludovic Nemo as are Piranesi and Hardy Hill. Other members of his Belgian family were playwrights or a pianist duo who simultaneously took their lives.

Here are a table of selections of his collaborations, and a photo of him at Pace Prints.

[On 11 February 2025 I add a footnote: I want to bring the Raphael et la fornarina suite into contact with a fragment I have colled (collé in English?) before: “the essential androgyny of the creative artist.”
I no longer remember whether it was from Tafuri, Klossowski, or a scholar of the latter. In any case, how do Picasso’s Raphaels fit into that analytic, hypersexed but (or “and”?) voyé? And of course the Julius figure (if that’s the right pope) does not technically add anything; his voyeur

role is never absent from the system (“economy”) of a painting and its exposure, unless the loop is hermetically closed as with my painting from last month, my only painting from the last half-year, viewed and promptly placed in a box which was closed, sealed, and placed under a large article of furniture.
To add to the theme in one more way, either completely irrelevant or consummately relevant (no two painters are closer than the greatest rivals of their century): Quoting Margaret Werth’s study of Matisse’s Bonheur de vivre, “what remains the best study devoted to [that painting,” Bois reproduces her primary observations: “the shepherd flutist, the only male figure in the painting, had initially been conceived as a female nude; she then notes that the sexual attributes of the other flutist, the large nude in the foreground, also clearly female in a study, were suppressed; that all the figures either have counterparts or form couples, and that all of them--apart from the shepherd and the "Ingresque" nude standing on the left, gazing at the spectator--are deanatomized through a drawing whose sadistic aggression was at that point unparalleled in Western pictorial art.”

Collecting the glimpses of the man in the mackintosh.

6: “I’m thirteen. No. The chap in the macintosh is thirteen. Death’s number. Where the deuce did he pop out of?”
6: “Now who is that lankylooking galoot over there in the macintosh? Now who is he I’d like to know? Now I’d give a trifle to know who he is. Always someone turns up you never dreamt of.”
6: “do you know that fellow in the, fellow was over there in the...
He looked around.
—Macintosh. Yes, I saw him, Mr Bloom said. Where is he now?”

10: “In Lower Mount street a pedestrian in a brown macintosh, eating dry bread, passed swiftly and unscathed across the viceroy’s path.”

11: “Wonder who was that chap at the grave in the brown macin.”

12: “The man in the brown macintosh loves a lady who is dead.”

13: “And that fellow today at the graveside in the brown macintosh. Corns on his kismet however.”
14: “Golly, whatten tunket’s yon guy in the mackintosh? Dusty Rhodes. Peep at his wearables. By mighty! What’s he got? Jubilee mutton. Bovril, by James.”
14: “Here see lost love. Walking Mackintosh of lonely canyon. Tuck and turn in.”
15: “THE SIGHTSEERS: (Dying.) Morituri te salutant. (They die.)
(A man in a brown macintosh springs up through a trapdoor. He points an elongated finger at Bloom.)
THE MAN IN THE MACINTOSH: Don’t you believe a word he says. That man is Leopold

M’Intosh, the notorious fireraiser. His real name is Higgins.
BLOOM: Shoot him! Dog of a christian! So much for M’Intosh!
(A cannonshot. The man in the macintosh disappears. …)”
15: “He is sausaged into several overcoats and wears a brown macintosh under which he holds a roll of parchment.”
16: “—M’Intosh and several others.
Nettled not a little by L. Boom (as it incorrectly stated) and the line of bitched type but tickled to death simultaneously by C. P. M’Coy and Stephen Dedalus B. A. who were conspicuous, needless to say, by their total absence (to say nothing of M’Intosh) L. Boom pointed it out to his companion B. A. engaged in stifling another yawn, half nervousness, not forgetting the usual crop of nonsensical howlers of misprints.”
17: “Who was M’Intosh?”

This poem, XXI in Joyce’s Chamber Music, is right for me in Los Angeles.

He who hath glory lost, nor hath
  Found any soul to fellow his,
Among his foes in scorn and wrath
  Holding to ancient nobleness,
That high uncomfortable one--
His love is his companion.

Really there is much romancier medievalism in Chamber Music. And, though love is of course the best subject, it is a relief to come to the end of Chamber Music and read some scattered few of the Pomes Pennyeach, where the love is somehow generalized, somehow various and somehow variegated, by comparison; and in these ways it is avowably more alive.

But, in Chamber Music, I was moved to real and deep sadness by XXXIV and XXXVI; XXXIV, especially in how it follows the three or four that immediately precede it, the cold of winter so acute after the end of love.

Immersed in pain, just now.

Are you trying to force something out of me? I wanted to say. I could find no other way to understand certain modes of conduct.

Forced into excruciating slowness of speech, of words forced ("stilted" is a word that comes to me, one I'm used to being saddled with, used even if just once, I am so sensitive and was then more impressionable still and the height of the Stanford admissions desk from whence it came into my green head) one by one, like my autistic brain gets clouded under confrontational distress of this kind, goes opaque like one of those togglable glass windows, and then nothing can really happen inside and nothing, really, can come out.

11 February 2025

Falling asleep last night, I made a note directing myself to "look in Klossowski, either Tatol's pdf or the one linked for a Hardy Hill exhibition (15 orient?), for stories that would fall between Süskind's Perfume and La Belle noiseuse: Obsession, even possession attained through aesthetic capture (whatever this may mean), and its friction with full and total love." Then, after I'd put it away, it occurred to me that what I was looking for is precisely Rohmer's chasteté absolue, the heat at the core of his work (particularly the Contes moraux) that smolders and never burns.

Charlie Finch, writing on Matisse's "Blue Nude" (1907), gives me an idea:

"Matisse was always great at adding frou-frou decoration to the edges of his paintings, a kind of lame distraction from his fundamentally erotic intentions, but what are his erotic intentions in Blue Nude? Plainly he enjoyed congress with his subject and he memorializes this by invisibly fusing elements of his own body (largeness, wideness, tallness) into hers! The charge of their coupling thus becomes far more dynamic than if he had actually included himself in the picture." [I add, later, that Bois says exactly the same thing with other words, seeing in the painting "the question of sexual difference as such, since the thigh of the nude in question is distorted into a gigantic phallus, which can't have been lost on Picasso."]

What if I paint my body into Bella's? What if I imagine our child, again and again (not "imagine our children," but instead, I repeat, imagine our child, again and again), invisibly fusing elements of my own body into hers and hers into mine? It would be on a large-ish scale, even slightly larger than Paula Modersohn Becker's most Rilke-real nudes, so that it's substantial, with a corporeal pull and push. There should be no mistaking what I'm doing, no possibility of thinking that I'm indulging an idly loving daydream ("what will they look like") or (even worse) an algorithmically-aided imagination of the same. No: I am, or would be, performing the most erotic move* possible (i.e. showable) (see difficulty just below) in paint. [* I think of Ebert on Last Tango and Unbearable Lightness. But of course I want to be the filmmakers (which includes the actors) that he perceived while watching those (with his eyes),

not to adopt, in any way, the sensibility of Ebert himself.]

This idea follows on all that's preoccupied me over the last day-ish, the Picasso 347 suite (especially Raphael et la fornarina), and Bois's Werth's Bonheur de vivre, and what I got caught up on at the end of last night (re. Klossowski and Rohmer and Rivette).

Even more broadly, I've been thinking for more than a week, or really more than a month, about how I can defeat all the dead ends that mulitply before me whenever I try to find ways of installing Love-art on the high erotic register where it belongs. Anything I think of either feels sexless or would alienate almost everyone I care about and, at that, actually betray my love herself.

So all I have are scattered ideas like this one. The most notable example before this was to somehow have a play of mirrors**--which I mean on a figurative register, i.e. more like just repetitional (baroque, variation-armature) structure--involving just surfaces, curves, fixated-upon (the dynamic of obsession with isolates and makes-multiply components of the body, at the cost of the unity (if not the harmony) of the whole (the dangerous rapport this dynamic strikes vis-à-vis any concept of "machine" is part of the risk, part of the thrill, because, as Derrida and whoever else (Deleuze, etc.) can tell you, anything that can be properly classed as "machine" is in fact the only real formalization possible for what traditionally gets the name Death); and so, I think, among other things, of playing out the Sugar Cubes-style cartoons, those long limbs snapping into rigidity or holding a certain pneumatic elasticity in their curves, playing them out with various photographic-tending stray sites of isolated trompe-l'œil on their (what amounts to) schematic anatomy-maps--and that this will be the closest I can get, just now, to what Bacon achieved (again and again, but especially here, in Bertolucci's diptych).

[** This links up again with the ongoing Bois piece, still hand in hand with Werth: The latest is maybe the richest yet and I've already sent Los Angeles to bring The Optical Unconscious to my branch:

"'Figures cohabit this space, but with the disjunctive transitions characteristic of dream images or hallucination.' / Starting with this disjunction (which greatly perturbed the critics when the painting was first exhibited at the 1906 Salon des Indépendants), and through an attentive analysis of the figures or groups of figures considered separately, Werth constructs a psychoanalytic interpretation of the painting as a fantasmatic screen, as a polysemic image conjuring up a series of basic fantasies (the return to the womb, seduction, Oedipal union) and contradictory sexual drives corresponding to the polymorphous infantile sexuality that Freud uncovered (narcissism, auto-eroticism, sadism, exhibitionism). This catalog revolves around castration anxiety, thematized from the outset, according to Werth, by all the material in the painting and the preparatory sketches that has to do with sexual difference. ... [That she restricts

herself to the figurative domain] is a pity, since the painting might then have seemed more than simply ‘an unembarrassed apology for infantile satisfactions and Dionysian joys,’ and she might not have been led to wonder whether Matisse’s representation of the female body is based on ‘innocence, irony or idiocy.’*** [I briefly pause to note that I seem on track to visibly embody an undecidiablity in this very same trichotomy, and that, for me, of course, innocence has always been and seems on track to continue to be the dominant term.] [*** To be honest, Werth goes beyond her figurative analysis when she notes that rhythm plays a primordial role in Matisse's eroticization of the pictorial plane (p. 73, n. 43). Like Werth, I can only mention here the necessity for a psychoanalytic analysis of rhythm. Rosalind Krauss sets out to do just that, starting with the notion of the "matrix" elaborated by Jean-François Lyotard with respect to Freud's famous text "A Child Is Being Beaten," in The Optical Unconscious (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 197-240. See also the chapter of this book devoted to Duchamp and his optical machines (pp. 95-146)]”]

Hardly any later at all, Bois offers another dense and compact statement for an armature (a generative core) I intend to hang this whole Love-art practice upon (I mean, in particular, the somewhat inscrutable, perhaps irreducible, and maybe even helpfully so, but in any case gnomic, talismanic, term “sexual difference”): “Leo Steinberg's inaugural reading of Les Demoiselles d’Avignon in fact showed, incontrovertibly, that the thematic core of this ‘philosophical brothel’ (as the painter briefly called it, on the advice of André Salmon) was sexual difference.” I paste generously Bois’s expansion upon this, because it’s all quite rich and potentially instructive on an ongoing basis: “The effects of this question on the painting's gestation and on its final form are comparable to those in Le Bonheur de vivre: we find the same sexual ambiguity or transmutation in certain figures (in the studies, the sailor--who later disappeared--is effeminate, and the seated woman is masculinized, whereas, in the painting, the student has changed sex, to become a prostitute); we also find the same movement from a unitary scene to a conglomerate of independent figures and the same stylistic disparities in the figures (the gap between the traditional modeling of the shepherd-flutist and the "childlike" drawing of the couple standing on the left in Le Bonheur is no less conspicuous than the one separating the ‘African’ women on the right and the so-called ‘Iberian’ women on the left in Picasso's work). I would add that in both cases we find innumerable references to the pictorial tradition, the same flattening of history. / The essential difference between the two canvases lies in their mode of addressing the spectator. In both instances, the figures or groups of figures inhabit the same space, but there is no communication between them. As Steinberg notes, however, in Les Demoiselles d'Avignon all the figures relate "singly, directly, to the spectator"; they stare at us. Whereas the initial theme was the unexpected arrival of a medical student (carrying either a skull or a book or both), creating a disturbance in the brothel (the women looking at him, the sailor lowering his eyes, as if embarrassed), "the event, the epiphany, the sudden entrance, is still the theme—but rotated through ninety degrees toward a viewer conceived as the picture's opposite pole." The suppression of the allegorical dimension, the stylistic diversity, and the violent interpellation of the spectator (a brutality unparalleled since Las Meninas, as Steinberg points out) go hand in hand …” By the end here, I’m surprised at how intensely the Hamlet-medical-student figure resembles Stephen Dedalus. Who is this ur-point-of-view, this very-core-protagonist, of “Modernism”? Merely an avatar of the artist (Picasso and Joyce)? How much of myself do I see in him?

[Overwhelmed at this that I find on Wikipedia while looking for the studies Bois mentions:

“Maurice Princet, a French mathematician and actuary, played a role in the birth of Cubism as an associate of Pablo Picasso, Guillaume Apollinaire, Max Jacob, Jean Metzinger, Robert Delaunay, Juan Gris and later Marcel Duchamp. Princet became known as "le mathématicien du cubisme" ("the mathematician of cubism"). Princet is credited with introducing the work of Henri Poincaré and the concept of the "fourth dimension" to artists at the Bateau-Lavoir. Princet brought to the attention of Picasso, Metzinger and others, a book by Esprit Jouffret, Traité élémentaire de géométrie à quatre dimensions (Elementary Treatise on the Geometry of Four Dimensions), 1903, a popularization of Poincaré's Science and Hypothesis in which Jouffret described hypercubes and other complex polyhedra in four dimensions and projected them onto the two-dimensional surface. Picasso's sketchbooks for Les Demoiselles d'Avignon illustrate Jouffret's influence on the artist's work.”]

It’s surprising to me that I’m completely unfamiliar with what Bois seems to think is a universal Freud reference, but, more than that, I’m deeply taken by this image, echoed in Fantastic Mr. Fox (and there so memorable too), and maybe it is even the subtension of another of those phrases that come to me whole, in idleness or a dream--the one, as it happens, that I appropriated as title for the first version of the most important and most singular thing I’m ever to write, “My Last Wolf”: “Chaque jour, le matin, je me réveille. Je ne pense qu’à mon dernier loup.” Bois: “The sense of stupefaction Steinberg discusses is nothing new for psycho-analysis, which sees it as the cardinal symptom of castration anxiety--as in the dream in which Freud's most famous patient finds himself petrified by the spectacle of completely motionless wolves looking at him through his bedroom window.”

Much later, Bois returns to this dream: “In his review of the Salon, Yakov Tugendhold, one of the most gifted Russian critics of the time, talks about the ‘boy werewolves hypnotized by the first-ever strains of the first instruments.’ Much more so than Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, Music is the Wolf-Man's dream, to the point where we have reason to wonder whether this very well-off young man, himself a painter, had not heard of or perhaps seen a reproduction of the work before recounting his famous dream to Freud.” But what’s even better to me is, here as below, the “” to be found in Tugendhold’s phrase, “boy werewolves hypnotized by the first-ever strains of the first instruments.” I could make of this, too, a generative ur-scenario, a scene with erotic charge (and not in the facile, common sense of that phrase); a scene with as much charge as Mallarmé’s faun’s afternoon, which is to say, much more charge than the basic premise of a satyr in the vicinity of nymph; what I mean is that the charge of the scene, as in Mallarmé (in whose work the nymphs are as dematerialized and as universalized and as realized as Rilke’s God after Russia), inhabits a deep and ahistorical and non-narrative plane; in this all-male scene with no evidence that clothing exists anywhere in the world, it is not that congress among the depicted boy-werewolves is on the horizon, and yet their bodies reverberate with the charge of their discovery (whose stakes are as high as those of any creation myth), its ecstatic elation, the movement it unleashes; they reverberate, not least with each other, the energy of each one amplified in the response (more than an echo) it finds in each (or some specific one or ones) of the others …

How colorful, Bois!: “Werth is perfectly justified in seeing Le Bonheur de vivre as an investigation into the origins of desire, but, for all her psychoanalyzing, she forgets that the mare sniffed by Matisse-the-stallion is painting as such, not simply the bodies represented in it. "Working means removing some of the slag of tradition," says Matisse. Removing it or cannibalizing it? Castration anxiety is linked to the fantasy of murdering the father and the

imaginary threat that results from it; psychoanalysis tells us that it is also what structures our personality, gives us access to the law— and founds tradition. Matisse's eclectic cannibalism in Le Bonheur de vivre is to be placed under the heading of this imaginary murder of the father, or fathers. It gives rise perhaps to a blithe and certainly regressive image of sexuality prior to the law, and onto a form of painting which is itself in heat. This is where Picasso intervenes with Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, which is a reprimand addressed to Matisse: "If we have the courage to kill the father symbolically, here's the truly terrifying situation we end up with—no more allegorical excuses, just castration pure and simple, viragos staring at—paralyzing—the spectator, petrifying his gaze."”

In a breath, Bois produces an archetypical-scale word-image that could be so generative in my hands: “these absurd giants in a cipher of a landscape.” He is glossing one of the versions of “Le luxe,” but what my eyes are on is word-image itself, which is, of course, the Correspondances-abstraction of the painting in question and the Formalist expansion-variation-urge somewhere deep within Bois’s sensibility (which is always one of the most thrillingly powerful active motors behind his so multivalent writings). (In place of “Correspondances-abstraction,” I could also have said: The distillate of the tincture formed by admixing the two to each other; the residue of the “microencounter” (that term I’ve become repulsed by and moved away from) between the two; perhaps most immediately and truly, their sexual procreate; or, invoking Hong Sang-soo’s figure (diagram?), as told in The Nation, for example (it is much recounted): “ Hong described his ambition in an uncharacteristically forward, if still elliptical, manner, drawing a diagram with two circles connected by dotted lines, under which he scrawled the phrase ‘Infinite Worlds Possible.’ As he explained: ‘Just look at these two circles in the drawing as two independent worlds. If you believe there’s a clear reason for these two worlds to exist, once you find a clear meaning between them, then these worlds themselves disappear. Once we make clear sense out of these two worlds, they are just used up. It happens that it’s not easy to give them a clear meaning. So all the questions are kept alive if there’s an infinite possibility of worlds.’”

I quite like this formulation (the italicized bit; I provide context just for fun, or also because it might be necessary: “As in the old Greek myth of a blinding petrification, there has been an inversion of the poles, a conversion. The taboo concerning the maternal genitals led to a multiplying of the snakes on Medusa's head; the interdiction on focalization (focalization having a masculine connotation) leads to a tension in the whole canvas in an endless quivering (which has a feminine connotation).” [This prompts a core memory for me, from early-middle childhood, of a certain fixation I had for things small and vulnerable, a fixation that seemed then (I still remember, even though I was only maybe 8 years old) like it should be private (was I then conscious, in my own inscrutable language, that the interest was sexual in nature?) and seems now like it might have been unhealthy, but I recount it anyway. Daydreams that there were beings, human or animal, natural or cartoonish, that were of a scale so much smaller than my own that their entire existence (unto the real possibility of extinguishment) was contingent upon my care, my protection, my whims; and nightmares of exactly the opposite relation, where it was I in the utterly-dependent, utterly-vulnerable scale-position. And its character was this: That it is reconjured all of an instant by the word quivering, which brings to mind thoughts of small furred animals, ones that could fit in a single hand, even an eight-year-old one. And I do agree, now, that quivering is a word as sexually charged as words come, and I may as well agree, too, that it codes feminine.] [Leaving my memory aside:] It reminds me of the discussion of the sexes

(“sexual difference” rather) and Miró and bullfighting in Cléo de 5 à 7: the two scenarios, Bois’s and Varda’s, are identical in tone, in their frankness, their openness, their easy knowledge that their dialectic is active right at the most fruitful site in all the world (by “easy” I maybe mean even muscular in one of the very precise senses I’ve tried to tease out of that word, including on the very same morning when I made what might have been my first note about that scene). I add Bois’s footnote, appended to the end of what I quote above, because it’s part and parcel: “I cannot pursue here this sexual metaphor in all its psychoanalytic developments, given that the "feminization" of painting is part of a long symbolic tradition, and that Matisse departs from it in certain respects (he writes to Pallady, for example, that "drawing is the female and painting the male"). / The extraordinary Nude with White Scarf (1909), which Matisse considered important enough to represent in The Pink Studio and The Red Studio, should be examined in this context as being--much more than Luxe--Matisse's version of the birth of Venus: from between two monumental thighs, one red, the other pink, emerges a phallic woman.” Bois is right:

In the couple pages leading up to this passage, Bois is sensitive to qualities of surface that I always feel I am alone in being sensitive to and interested in. (I recall that this is what instantly sainted him when I read his writing for the first time, about Ad Reinhardt’s black and Puvis’s matteness; assigning this is, perhaps, the only good thing Prof. Troy did for me.) And then, here, the crux is that it makes me wonder whether, after all, van Eyck’s glazing method is amenable to my re-Symbolism (re-Symbolism being, recall, the return-in-glory of Matisse’s image of the tennis-racket-taut talismanic areas-of-pastes-in-tension-on-surfaces) I’ve often planned upon it being so, but maybe I reach a block there, even if it’s not so indispensable to know that right now. “‘But a painted surface should not be confused with a stained-glass window. The stained-glass window is lit through its transparence, while one paints directly on the canvas. A painted surface cannot provide the sensation of being lit from within-which would be very bad-since it has to offer to the eye the resistance of a surface, without which it is intolerable.’ Similarly, in 1934, he argues against Romm, who claimed that the effect of the Merion panels should be analogous to that of ‘stained-glass windows in the semi-darkness of a nave’: ‘My painted surface is quite opaque, and does not produce any illusion of the transparence of a stained-glass window; rather, it reflects light.’ There is no abandoning, not for anything, the tennis-racket tension.” Bois complicates that question further (or answers it) in what immediately follows: “But Matisse was wrong to react so strongly, even if it is true that the "harmonies" produced by the underlying whiteness "are extremely fragile," and the "small changes in color" that they generate "can easily lead to excessive modifications in the painting," as is perhaps the case with the Moroccan canvases. Nothing is more dilated, inflated, or ample than Goldfish and Sculpture from 1912, all stemming from the limpidity of its brushwork. The quivering of the white, under the color, is what brings the painting to a state of erection.”

Bois is drawing to a close, and the rhythm (the way stakes, junctures, maneuvers, necessities, and bearings are made so palpable) of Bois-Matisse's thought will soon become inaccessible to me again. I preserve it, one last time, in this outcut moment (which is not devoid of independent interest on its own terms): "Coup de soleil is a coup de grâce: there was no going back to Impressionism without also going back to its style; there was no way of painting light and also doing a Picasso. Rather than getting bogged down in a compromise that led straight to abstraction, he had to plunge back into the luminist tradition, to go as far back as Corot, as is clear from Tree Near Trivaux Pond, a strict companion-piece to the Rayonnist flash of lightning (it is the same format as Shaft of Sunlight)." Here are the two paintings he's speaking of:

Three paintings are mentioned as a final posing of "the Matisse system," right at the end, whose defining attributes, in this last formulation, are "the brilliant polychromaticism employed between 1904 and 1917 [which was recuperated starting in the mid-20s, in the following paintings], the tensed-up circulation, expansion, the ana-grammatized clarion call." I started this essay at the end, incidentally; these three, together with "Acanthus, one of his most voluptuous canvases," were the ones whose overwhelming and mysterious beauty (quite possibly unsurpassed in painting) made me read this sixty-three pages (it took me three days). Odalisque with Grey Culottes and Harmony in Yellow are said to share that "stroboscopic" effect, and Interior with a Dog "explodes."

Bois does not mention any post-painting work, the one which (or was it a retroextension of the couper dans la couleur idea back into oil painting?) meant so much to Hantaï. Schjeldahl describes it this way: “The last decade and a half of Matisse’s life, spent mostly as an invalid, was a bonus gift of time—“a second life,” he called it—in which, deciding that he had gone as far as he could with oil painting, he invented and developed a new kind of art [everything for the chapel in Vence, and Jazz].” This could be, perhaps, a symbolic crossroads which I take as that bleeding open juncture I was speaking of yesterday: Matisse left oil painting, but it was, of course, not its end; I take it up right there.

I walked over to my six-month-old painting (I remember when Fennec had the same age) in a daze and almost squeezed some paint from the tube in the afterglow of a three-day reading, having done everything I could to preserve the mist of Bois-Matisse’s “rhythm (the way stakes, junctures, maneuvers, necessities, and bearings are made so palpable),” indeed intending (as I still do) to hold it until I (some might say) hallucinate it straight into reality (but those who see words the way I do would say it’s already real).

I must hold onto the secret (“hide the secret” (deer in Gaelic)); only Rohmer-Klossowski can get me out of the too-classical, too-predictable, too-simple bind of Rivette’s Frenhofer and Schjeldahl’s Spurling’s Matisse.

12 February 2025

Last night, before going to ArtCenter (my first time setting foot in an art school) to finally see the Grad Art Seminar series, I couldn’t stop moving around. Bella asked why I was nervous, and I told her I wasn’t, I was just excited, because Carroll Dunham has been a hero-figure for me for four years, or since my (or was it Bella’s?) first painting class, during which I discovered books of his work in the library and read them on the linseed-scented concrete floor of the painting studio. I was visibly excited.

I could not believe my ears when Jack Bankowsky, passing me on the way out of the auditorium, said quietly that the “nightcap” would be at Edendale Bar, on Rowena. I said Oh, that’s on my way home! And he said Mine too.

I couldn’t figure out why he asked. I’d asked a question after the talk; then I’d waited by the podium to kindly thank Carroll Dunham (I’m not sure whether to call him “Tip” as everyone who knows him does) for showing the photos of his sculptures, and expressed regret that no one’s questions were about them (He said the fifty-odd people in the auditorium were more than had ever seen them yet). While I was waiting to say this, Tim Blum’s son, looking 18-ish, said he wasn’t really working at the gallery anymore, and was more “making work,” in Echo Park.

My question had been about ambitions and purposes and “advancing the history of abstraction.” This was his phrase, that I’d caught during the talk; I was asking whether it was local to the late-70s paintings he was speaking of when he said it, or whether he still thought in terms like that; he said that he didn’t, and that it was actually the changes and realizations of his own work, out of the work from within, that had made this be so, because his work has always been a direct

questioning, or a testing, or, in his words, “hypotheticals” (“Can this be a painting? What about this, can this be a painting?”), applying pressure to that very notion and anything similar to it that would frame or confine what he was doing. “No sense of self, but a great sense of purpose”: A phrase from his psychoanalyst, which stuck with him. My intention with my question was to confirm that there was no particular idea of a particular purpose, just a sense of the feeling of purpose, a drive that cannot be put into words, to which the only viable response is acquiescence. I also thanked Jack for not laughing me out of town when I said that I didn’t know about these talks (sitting next to him at the Buckhiester talk at Kordansky--I reminded him). That was right after I’d moved to Los Angeles, I said. Tala Madani, whom he’d introduced me to that same evening, was standing next to him in the aisle when I said this last night. I said hi, was introduced to Nathaniel standing next to her, and then had begun to walk out. An ArtCenter student started a short conversation by the door, and I was talking to him when Jack let me know the name of the bar. I just couldn’t believe it.

I arrived and stood next to two people I recognized from the audience while trying to get a beer from the bartender. The man looked like Sam Barsky. The woman was nice when I tried to start a conversation; she asked if I’d liked the talk. I revealed the depth of why it would have been impossible for me not to, I asked if they were fans too, and she said “fans and, lucky to say, friends.”

Then I talked briefly to Jack and a very tall man whose name I did not learn until I got back to my apartment. I learned from Jack, at this point, that he remembered I was a student, but couldn’t remember where, and thought I was an art student; I told him Art History, and Stanford, and began to think, at this point, that his vague memory of Stanford was, maybe, why he’d invited me here--or was it really a simple act of kindness, sensing my curiosity.

We all moved to sit, and ended up in three groups. Because of who I was talking to on the way over from the bar--I overheard he was born in Yorkshire, and excitedly told him my impending travel plans--it was inevitable that I not sit with the group I did. It was me, Tala who ordered fish & chips, Nathaniel who ordered steak, and that tall man who, like me, ate only beer; he turned out to be Michael Williams, and I’d seen a painting of his at the Carnegie last summer in Pittsburgh. I was able to deduce this fact, an hour later, by clicking the names on David Kordansky’s website (I had a couple hunches) until I recognized his face.

Nathaniel was delightful to talk to. He confirmed what Georgia had just texted me about Francis Bacon’s studio (that it was real, and authentic, full of everything hauled over from his London studio, in what was really a nice part of town, he said, there in South Kensington), and told me that he’d recently learned Samuel Beckett had driven Andre the Giant to school in their shared tiny hometown in the Irish countryside. “The two great pillars of drama!” he said; I smiled: “One supporting all the concepts, the other all the weight.” We talked about school (he said Oxford was thrillingly alive during his undergrad, but he did a sculpture masters at RCA just to get into London), and also criticism: We agreed it’s a shame, but a truth, that Diva Corp can’t put his name on his writing. Nathaniel said, you’d think, if the pyramid (of the art-world scheme) is so large, and the money-making crown at the top so small, then there ought to be so many people in the rest of it that can say what they want; I said, but everyone, no matter where, is drawing out their upward path, and thinking of all the interactions that will be necessary, and how to make them frictionless; and then he quoted Pasolini about how bourgeois aspiration is its own kind of fascism, exerts its own controlling and immobilizing force, pinning the hierarchy in place. He also said he remembered when he was friends with a lot of people who were friends with a lot of

editors at Frieze (“this was before it was an art fair”), and how absurd it was that the magazine could get angry calls from dealers after running certain pieces.
Michael Williams made me nervous, because I’m not used to talking to people so dour. He said he was trying to figure out how artists’ bravado goes well or poorly, and offered Julian Schnabel as an exemplum of how it can amount to looking consummately embarrassing (silly or stupid or sad--I don’t recall the phrase). He mentioned that his mother had been a painter and was now doing standup. I couldn’t believe the coincidence: “Do you know Georgia Gardner Gray?” (he didn’t); “I’ve just been cast in a play, by this painter who stages plays at openings, whose main character is set on doing standup”--something about painting, and standup comedy--I didn’t expect a joyless reaction, as he darkly changed the subject to his mother’s deep narcissism, and the difficulty of having a parent like that. Maybe there’s a deeper friendliness that’s just going over my head just now.
Tala was friendly and personable as can be. I never told her how, in college, I placed her name right alongside Simon Porte Jacquemus, for people who had tectonically shifted the way I think about persons’ bodies. Michael said he worked for Matthew Barney for a year and a half, and, when pressed, conceded that he was a nice guy. I felt like I’d dropped the ball when the conversation was revolving around Barney and Nauman. These are references I’ve almost deliberately remained dark on, thinking they define conversations I’m just not seeking a part in. That made this conversation feel harder than it had to, but then, maybe I really am just destined to remain irreconcilable to a profoundly Gen X sensibility: I can appreciate its weight, and I can recognize in these three a truly impressive eloquence with it, but I can’t inhabit it. [I have to add a caveat: Dan Nadel brings Williams’s world to life in a way that one single painting of his did not; if Nadel is right in his tracing of Williams’s particular, highly-specific romanticism through its layers of not-quite-irony filtration all the way through to transcendence, then I’m dead wrong here. https://www.artforum.com/features/luck-of-the-draw-the-art-of-michael-williams-233330/]
I barely talked to Carroll Dunham, who split his time between the two other groups: Jack and some ArtCenter grad students just a space to my right, and a full table, across the room, Sam Barsky & co., who were set to drive him home. But as these three got up to move toward the door, Michael and Nathaniel talking (I didn’t quite follow) about email addresses (this talk must have influenced me) while “Tip” and Tala gave each other warm goodbyes (they really had so much to talk to each other about, I was thinking, visions in such fruitful proximity), I waited my turn, and asked Mr. Dunham if he had an email where he’d be interested to receive long, rambling fan mail from nerdy young admirers. “Ask Jack for my address,” he said; “I respond to every email I receive”; “Not too long, not too long, please.” I’m not sure, as ever, whether I properly achieve the humor necessarily visible on my face for successful communication.
In my apartment, I couldn’t calm down, wondering in one way after another whether I’d behaved as well as I could in a setting I’ve waited years to find myself in.

Recalled the phrase “contemporary painting moves,” which Tatol may have produced for Omari Douglin; maybe what he means is something that Laura Owens and Michael Williams have preserved from Albert Oehlen (and who knows who else inhabits that same matrix); anyway,

Douglin was interested in Oehlen and other contemporaneous Germans, maybe at the time of the show in question for Tatol, as I recall. (And Nadel invokes Oehlen for Williams: https://www.artforum.com/features/luck-of-the-draw-the-art-of-michael-williams-233330/)

I made for myself a little gallery day, Karma Blum Kordansky, the best of the sleek, or the sleekest of the best, or it would have been both of those at once if Brown was also on the list, but I'm going there tomorrow (for an opening, Uckotter; I can't figure out why, but it's the first since Aran on 2 November 2024: maybe Diva Corp is right that he's preoccupied with New York).

There were flops though.

I sit down to enjoy a glass of Hampden Estate with a teaspoon of water, excited for the narcotic effect (that incomparable warmth, and the quickly onset and quickly dispersed impairment felt behind and between and above the eye sockets) of my timing here at the end of an unusual number (5) of consecutive foodless hours. I'll pair it with Samoas that my mom mailed, but not til I've drunk at least half the glass.

I saw my first-ever of the Yoshitomo Nara painting from the time when he was working under the emulation of--I believe the term was something like--Bonnard and other French painters from the end of the 19th century, who developed almost unconscionably subtle plays of color layering, handling and juxtaposition (OK, the term was nothing like that, but that's how I chose to let it live on in my head). I was devastated to find that it was the only painting in the entire exhibition. The little handmodeled clay heads of misfits, enormously enlarged into their urethane-on-bronze final format, were dreamy in their odd way but felt out of touch with any art conversation I'm familiar with. So I photographed the painting more closely than any publication would dare.

The other show at Blum, upstairs, whose name I don't even remember, made me close my eyes. I leafed longingly through the books in the lobby, two volumes of Eddie Martinez's drawings and a couple books documenting Grotjahn exhibitions, all curiously devoid of a single sentence in any language; and the Backcountry "zine"* that I reverently purchased, or rather ordered online

for pickup, nearly one year ago.
[* I'm picking it up again now. I wouldn't call it by that word. "Zine" makes me think, though, of Michael Williams, whose dabbling in that medium certainly partakes of a Dunham-Krazy Komics strain that may even still now be supplying some of its life to Delacruz & co., those artists that Tatol so eloquently (he laughs too) united under the banner "post-whimsical figuration tending towards tactile abstraction via the psychedelic abstract tradition instead of the art historical one, not out of any ignorance but to consciously avoid any air of academic stuffiness."]
Leslie Vance supplied the most appallingly bad art I've ever seen chez Kordansky. And I've been severely disappointed before. McKinniss was a bit better, but it really just made me feel down on technique-reliant painting. I felt, looking at his work, that he was slavishly indulging in the technics of craft only up to the scale of the individual contour or surface, at shameful expense of attention to anything requiring even a single level of elevation of cognition (the considerations you'd group under the heading of "composition," say). It made me realize that I hold a very select band of painterly techniques--those which, basically, you can learn on YouTube--in abysmally low esteem. Sure, "bad painting" was a notion deliberately activated by the show, etc. Art that is fundamentally ironic like that, if that's even true of this show (I'd put my money, instead, on the hypothesis that such a thought never crossed McKinniss's mind), could hardly be more alien to me. The strongest thought I had in there was to tell them to hold onto the Friends painting until the news about Obama and Aniston breaks ("I'm feeling bullish on that one").

At Karma, I was surprised to find the Tamo exhibition being de-installed. It is supposed to continue through tomorrow. It was a strange feeling, seeing the paintings variously propped against the wall on little foam prisms and carried out of the room.

I made these notes:
[Are you aware of and interested in the work of] Eddie Martinez?

Marley Freeman? (Karma has a book in the lobby bookstore)

These two are my favorite, for the electric peppermint (Hantaï's Matisse's effect) and for the concentration of detail in the contour of that insane shape (close to a Bacon ellipse-with-corners, but even more spatially complicated/indeterminate/chimeric).

"Francalanza (b. 2000)" alerted me, via the internet, to the painter Piero Manai, whose painting here has a quality almost as quintessentially tactile as certain Gustons (I mean, maybe, the orthodox AbEx ones, the ones with just white-scale or possibly also pink-tinted accumulations of brushstrokes, which I, perhaps somewhat controversially, hold to be the most neurologically titillating of his whole œuvre).

How could I contain my surprise when I learned in an email from Ross Simonini that he too calls Dunham “a friend” and that a work of Dunham’s burned in his home?

13 February 2025

Notes, slightly expanded this morning, tucked away before bed last night:

Find out what Barney did with wolves*, then think of My last wolf (vaguely) but REALLY see if there’s something I can do with what Bella said would be a better version of the “famous” dream analysis of Freud’s “wolf man” (also Picasso Steinberg, philosophical brothel; also Matisse musicians, werewolf malchiki)

[* It’s still not clear to me whether I would like any of his actual art--though it very well may elicit an overwhelming adoration--but, just in the trailer of Redoubt and this preface to an interview with him on that film/exhibition, it seems like his ingredients and set-piece forms are exquisite: “Deep into Redoubt—Matthew Barney’s new film about animals, alchemy, and the astronomical alignment of earthly bodies and heavenly stars—a pack of wolves wanders into a house and tears it to shreds. A lot of enigmatic action leads up to the disembowelment, much of it quiet and subdued. The mostly wordless movie is set in central Idaho, in remote hinterlands marked by mountains and trees that seem to stand in wait of whatever ghastly or graceful happening might transpire in the wild. Barney stars as one of the main characters, a U.S. Forest Service worker who boasts a burly beard and takes up landscape drawing by unconventional means. Choreography figures in the storyline, first through movement barely discernible as dance and later in forms that turn more conspicuous. / Other characters at the film’s core are Diana, the Roman goddess of the hunt, and two nymphs (identified as “Calling Virgin” and “Tracking Virgin”) who accompany her in the matter of translating animalistic endeavors into cosmic terms. And then there is a figure known as the Electroplater, who transforms Barney’s landscape drawings into emanations in metal by way of a process involving voltage shot through a cathode sunk in a chemical bath. / All together, the component parts make for a mesmerizing movie and a premise for making related artworks—large-scale sculptures and processed copper plates hung on walls—for the sake of consideration in the waking world.” Every stage of the filmed etching process--the Barney character drawing into the velvety black ground in the exquisite snow landscape, the electroplating bath--inspires enormous envy in me. And the Flemish Primitive aspect of these doors (recall that book about doors I found in the GRI) inspires a sense of enormous potential. But I think I’d like to have oil paint on top of the copper instead, even if not covering it completely.]

And: Think about incorporating versions of wolf man dream into various sleeping and waking sequences in the plan; also think about assembling as many different interpretations of the original signification-less sentence (chaque jour … dernier loup) as possible, and layering each one on, one by one, until finally it becomes clear that all that they all had in common was the original sentence itself

One of the bathing sequences ought to be a tropical snorkel, with all that I had planned for that idea once; then maybe there is spearfishing there too, spearfishing in a survivor-tropical way, the thought of spearfishing in the mind of a snorkeler (duality between very Catholic "it's ok to eat fish because they don't have any feelings" and on the other hand the fact that he had a pet betta (rumble fish, and the beautiful Matisse-goldfish-red betta in the tank in Severance, like reminding me of that iPhone aquarium app)); also the Avventura spearfisher and the attendant fantasy of subsisting off spearfishing, and then Picasso ritually-indulgently bathing in that same sea (what is there to catch? Those nearly-meatless rockfish (the gorgeously optically-active but venomous rascasse, or red scorpionfish; sea robin, resembling nothing so much as a leathery osteoporotic old man; the world's heaviest eel, the European conger; and, if your luck is extreme, the horrid monkfish, that abomination, whose other names "frogfish" and "sea-devil" reveal only a sliver of the visual and tactile aspect) that go into bouillabaisse? What did Picasso get from it? Can I assemble a total catalogue of all his fruits de mer in every still life ever? Can I do to something what he did to the oursins (many of them are kept in Antibes, but I mean all of them)? What in the Raphael et Fornarina suite resembles the urchins (the answer is clear and it's quite a striking figure)?).

Maeterlinck and Crommelynck (the Elder): Forevision of this (GGG's) play becoming a talismanic drame for me, a few characters channeling forces larger than their own beings and in their somewhat-inscrutable Acts accomplishing something on Prospero's register (indeed this is how I always find myself speaking after a movie*), in the precise way I imagine these Belgians having been--which is to say, all the indelible-change accomplished-magic Yeats felt in Ubu Roi (which is thus an incantatory utterance in its own way) but perhaps (I imagine Maeterlinck and Crommelynck this way) using no means (character types, settings, textures) that Mallarmé would not have used himself.

[* For example, on Herzog's Nosferatu: "with about fifteen minutes to go, Herzog the writer departs from an at times shotwise faith to the original, and he and his trio [Adjani, Ganz, and Kinski] forge their own immortal symbol-acts in the final scenes" and on The Pianist: "Alongside the saints, if not usually among them, there are actors (who depend on directors and) whose performance transfigures human being" and on Silence: "There are actors in here who bring a commitment to performance that, viewed, can really change lives" (this is a different kind of transformation which is never far when the other one, that I had been speaking of, is at hand; as alchemists know, the momentum of conversion easily leaps from one material to another) and on Murnau's Nosferatu: "in the final intertitle, it graduates (for me) from excellent horror film to

formidable artwork: '… and the truth bore witness to the miracle: at that very moment, the Great Death came to an end, and the shadow of the deathbird was gone ... as if obliterated be the triumphant rays of the living sun'" and on Last Tango in Paris (particularly in how it elicits the language of sacrament, i.e. "the telltale sign (the visible reality)" and what that implies): "... constant and consummated breakdown at the peaks of sex and violence. The telltale sign (the visible reality) of this breakdown is always in some way the shutting out of (i.e., death to) the world, at its most poetic in this film in the scene where the dancers' world is hermetically cut off from Brando and Schneider's, untouchable by (or untouchable from within) Brando and Schneider's. Its solution, then, of course, is always going to have to be Love. Brando and Schneider were never to become, ultimately, capable."]

About the actual Maeterlinck I learn something that absolutely confirms him as a representative for this kind of drama: He wanted no violent emotion or particular bodily animation from his actors, only actions and lines; for this reason he wrote plays for marionettes for a time and, even after this, continued to call his actors "marionettes." They are vessels, charged and active; their verbal and ritual activity on stage is the whole substance of their performance. This principle is deep behind his notion of "static drama," where all the exceptional and bustling events so definitive of the received notion of tragedy are cleared out of the way, and the core of the action (the transformative incantation) still remains in the still silence. [I add on 14 February 2024 a remarkably aligned pair of sentences written by Éric Rohmer in his "Le Cinéma, art de l'espace," his very first text as a critic, says de Baecque / Herpe: "Murnau was not only able to avoid any concession to the anecdotal, but also to dehumanize subjects that appear to be the richest in human emotion. […] All the elements that might have drawn our attention to something other than this immediate registering of the transcendence within the sign are eliminated."]

And about the actual Fernand Crommelynck I learn that he wrote artful farces which reveal in glorious light the monumental conclusion that lies sleeping in the heart of any of certain qualities which, even if apparently minor or easily overlookable, nonetheless amount, even in their miniature quotidian instantiations, to a lapse of volitional control, to an exposure of the thrownness that is our truth (our "at-the-hands-of" state of being).

For some reason, a couple dozen pages into Bolaño's 2666 (it was not part of my plan but I can't seem to leave it alone), I cannot help but to keep imagining Blanchot every time I am to imagine Benno von Archimboldi, and to imagine Blanchot's writings (recits etc.) every time I am to imagine Archimboldi's. Perhaps this Blanchot I imagine is tinged with Borges and with Huysmans; but in any case he is mostly Blanchot.

From Ross Simonini, in his Believer essay "The All," on generalists and specialism: "Epictetus said, 'It's not what happens to you but how you react to it that matters.' Another way of saying this is: what you pay attention to is reality. In every moment, where are you aiming your

senses?" A fantastic formulation to layer onto/into my picture of "microencounters."

A line from the same that does more to make me think deeply: "Some long-term generalists focus exclusively on a single activity for a number of years before moving on to the next. Rather than doing many things simultaneously, they do them sequentially." The enormous difficulty--which I try to answer with the technique (méthode) of superposition--is figuring out how to leverage the sequential into a harmony; in other words, how to negate the possibility that a sequential generalism can end up reducing itself to fragmented specialisms, none benefitting from the full-attention focus that each receives in turn.

Is it true? The internet tells me that "on 11 March 889, a 22-year-old Japanese emperor wrote in his diary about his new black cat":

"On the oth Day of the 2nd Month of the First Year of the Kampo era.
Taking a moment of my free time, I wish to express my joy of the cat. It arrived by boat as a gift to the late Emperor, received from the hands of Minamoto no Kuwashi.
The color of the fur is peerless. None could find the words to describe it, although one said it was reminiscent of the deepest ink. It has an air about it, similar to Kanno. Its length is 5 sun, and its height is 6 sun. I affixed a bow about its neck, but it did not remain for long.
In rebellion, it narrows its eyes and extends its needles. It shows its back.
When it lies down, it curls in a circle like a coin. You cannot see its feet. It's as if it were circular Bi disk. When it stands, its cry expresses profound loneliness, like a black dragon floating above the clouds.
By nature, it likes to stalk birds. It lowers its head and works its tail. It can extend its spine to raise its height by at least 2 sun. Its color allows it to disappear at night.
I am convinced it is superior to all other cats."

I'm closing all my tabs, and this should be attached to something from last month, but there is a notable fashion show, MM6 Maison Margiela Pitti Uomo A/W 2025, whose copy has something distillable for me: "Black as a whole spectrum of nuances and attitudes, from burgundy to gaffer tape, through tailored textures and straightforward dressing. Set in a glass box, on a night that glistens in Florence, the show is an exercise in masculine dressing, the MM6 Maison Margiela way - straightforward, item-driven and eminently not narrative - using Miles Davis as a filter.

The suit, trench coats, bombers, and denim—reimagined in plastified knits, faux fur, and industrial shine. It's a sensual, insouciant take on the man as both the subject and the object of desire."

Two remarkable stills from Paul Schrader's Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters

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A vision, really, of a certain set of paintings of a kind that I could make. They could be framed set out from the wall a bit, with sheets of shiny aluminum or very very thin stainless steel, four sheets to a painting, say, each five or six inches wide in one dimension and the other length equal to that of one of the sides of the painting, bent in half parallel to the longer dimension, one edge flush with the surface of the painted panel, the other face of the bent sheet flush with the wall. For example.

The title could be "Little guys," like as in the little guy Bella just dyed sewed and stuffed for Daph. ("Little guys" reminds me of the always-jarringly off-the-cuff and really anything-goes (these descriptors feel disqualifyingly thought-through and they therefore miss the point entirely) off-kilter titling of Michael Williams (which in turn reminds me of the lyrics of Dirty Projectors and maybe more than anything else things happening in Germanic countries now like Schiefe Zahne): "We'd better get my Prius," "Permanent green," "Untitled Puzzle Drawing (Struck Set 3)," "Large HBO," "Yoga Online Series," "New File.") She could make more of them, they could incorporate prompts from me, they could end up somewhere between him (below) and them (just further below).

The vision was triggered by Bella showing me a picture of a stain (or a water droplet's impact, or something) on a shirt of mine; she said "water angel" or something like that, and at first I couldn't really see it, and that on its own reminded me of when she said "like one of your angels" regarding the drawing (our little game we were trying, guess the drawing being made one stroke at a time on your back) that I later randomly used (it was first to hand) to create a Substack account.

I imagined transmuting her stencil (below) in ways such as this (one more below), or in any way that might have been thought up by the Carroll Dunham of the painting of the first image he showed on Tuesday (third one below).

(I was actually really surprised, actually, when I sat there in the auditorium and realized how he'd made the shapes, by just repeating an almost perfectly identical gesture in a totally free-floating translation, and then coloring in (with a very odd pair-tonality) a new shape by just obeying and disobeying the contours in play seemingly at random.)
And then I thought how much all these looked like the images from the experiment by Douglas Guilbeault, the images that I thought, one afternoon, among the clouds, could be the actual

quintessence of my fusion of embryology with theological diagrammatology.

This is crazy, but the abstract would even make a nice presser.

"Individuals vary widely in how they categorize novel and ambiguous phenomena. This individual variation has led influential theories in cognitive and social science to suggest that communication in large social groups introduces path dependence in category formation, which is expected to lead separate populations toward divergent cultural trajectories. Yet, anthropological data indicates that large, independent societies consistently arrive at highly similar category systems across a range of topics. How is it possible for diverse populations, consisting of individuals with significant variation in how they categorize the world, to independently construct similar category systems? Here, we investigate this puzzle experimentally by creating an online "Grouping Game" in which we observe how people in small and large populations collaboratively construct category systems for a continuum of ambiguous stimuli. We find that solitary individuals and small groups produce highly divergent category systems; however, across independent trials with unique participants, large populations consistently converge on highly similar category systems. A formal model of critical mass dynamics in social networks accurately predicts this process of scale-induced category convergence. Our findings show how large communication networks can filter lexical diversity among individuals to produce replicable society-level patterns, yielding unexpected implications for cultural evolution."

And I could put the citation as a footnote at the end: That would be funny. "Guilbeault, Douglas, Andrea Baronchelli & Damon Centola, "Experimental evidence for scale-induced category convergence across populations," Nature Communications, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-020-20037-y

(I can't believe how fast I found these. It took me about eleven seconds. The paper was titled "Experimental evidence for scale-induced category convergence across populations.")
All this and yet somehow it still needs something--still needs something, maybe, of the scenes from the Attack of the Clones movie that take place on the planet Camino, with a whole visual lexicon quite isolated from the rest of the Star Wars chain-linkage of lexica.

Where could I show paintings at this angle, with this vaguely-Kayemes vaguely-Black Dragon but subtracting actual stoner posture from wherever it might crop up (if it ever does) in either of those? Maybe in some space relating in some way to a new friend I've made tonight,

who seems to know a lot about offbeat little spaces in places like Chinatown.

[Well, I wrote all this and then I went to sit down on a couch and I stepped on a needle Bella had lost in the rug while making the "little guy." It was a No. 5, two inches long, still threaded. The threading end, not the needlepoint, went into my foot, perpendicular to the sole, probably until it hit a bone, because half the needle was buried in my foot, thread and all. I couldn't get it out the first couple times I pulled on it because it was stuck so hard. It barely bled, but the nerves in my foot are now behaving strangely. I feel worse about these paintings now on a strictly Pavlovian level.]

Tonight I met Adam Verdugo, who drove 5 minutes over to his garage, "Tiffany's Door," to show me Ramsey Alderson's paintings and accept my six pack of Budweiser as an apology for how I must have looked, cracking can and then immediately leaving when Bella felt awkward. He told me about "New York artists fund," "P.e.o.p.l.e account," "Quarters" (? - I don't remember what this was, just that he didn't mean the restaurant Nala took us to years ago) and "Eco set for materials (book 30min scenic fast pass)." He was a delight to talk to.

I also formally met August Blum, saying to him "Were you at the Carroll Dunham talk the other day?" He liked my yellow Abaco hat from Mom, he said he mostly did photography and lived in Echo Park and knew people who were Stanford class of 2017; I said I lived around Hollywood and Normandie and am a painter but "it's under construction" and I'm mostly writing right now; and he asked to follow me on Instagram. He was wearing a long black overcoat and a long red bandana as a scarf. He said he admired Carroll Dunham for being "no bullshit," and that he's "one of the last" in this regard.

The yellow-carpeted, Marlboro smoke-packed Uckotter show of seven paintings was an actual stunner. [On 4 March 2025 I add that I mentioned its carpet to Georgia while we were struggling with the echo in Regen's enormity. She said that paintings always look so good with carpet--too good, actually, which is why she never does it. Well, I'm far from the point when my paintings can be approached on their own terms anyway, so no use in me trying (yet) to ensure that they are.]

14 February 2025

This morning I've continued to enjoy my return to the publications of Douglas Guilbeault et al. This is a figure from a paper he mentioned near the opening of a syllabus for a new seminar he's teaching (he just moved from Berkeley to Stanford), "Theoretical Computational Social Science." This paper, with a fascinating methodology, is "Computational Life: How Well-formed, Self-replicating Programs Emerge from Simple Interaction," by Blaise Agüera y Arcas et al.

On a similar note, I handpicked this small but rich selection of references for the idea of chemistry that has been really quite interesting to me for about a year. The latest resuscitation was triggered by Rivette, whose Belle noiseuse contained a line about the art dealer character that was something like “Balto [Balthazar] est un chimiste. De temps un temps un simple formule peut gagner un somme énorme.”

A living library concept to capture the dynamics and reactivity of mixed-metal clusters for catalysis https://www.nature.com/articles/s41557-024-01726-3

Synthesis of pillar-layered metal–organic frameworks with variable backbones through sequence control https://www.nature.com/articles/s41557-024-01717-4

In situ nonlinear optical spectroscopy for probing buried oxide–water interfaces https://www.nature.com/articles/s41557-024-01709-4

Oxide–and silicate–water interfaces and their roles in technology and the environment https://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/acs.chemrev.2c00130

Mesoporous single-crystal metal–organic frameworks https://www.nature.com/articles/s41557-024-01727-2

Practical electronics and robotics for chemists https://www.nature.com/articles/s41557-024-01703-w

Evolving learning styles https://www.nature.com/articles/s41557-024-01679-7
Introduction to Chemical Engineering | Lectures by Professor Emeritus Channing Robertson https://cheme.stanford.edu/academics-admissions/where-do-chemical-engineers-work/introduction-chemical-engineering-lectures

CHEMENG 12SC: An Exploration of Art Materials: The Intersection of Art and Science
There is growing interest in the intersection of art and science, whether from artists adapting technology to suit their visions or from scientists and engineers seeking to explain various visual effects. To take advantage of possible creative sparks at the art/science interface, it is necessary for fuzzies and techies to have some knowledge of the language used by the other side. This interface will be explored through examining approaches used by an artist and an engineer in the context of the materials science of cultural objects. In-class lectures, hands-on studio practice, and field trips will be used to illustrate these different perspectives. At the heart of the scientific approach is the notion that a cultural object, e.g., a painting, is a physical entity comprising materials with different physical properties and different responses to environmental stresses presented by light, heat, and water. In support of this outlook, in-class lectures and discussions will focus on the basic concepts of color, optics, mechanics, composite structures, and response of the object to environmental stress, and we will visit Bay Area museums to see how artists employ such techniques. The hands-on studio experience is designed to increase students' confidence and develop their appreciation of differences in materials. It is not necessary to have any artistic training, only a willingness to experiment. The in-class studio projects will include working with line and shadow; color, binders, and mordants; global sources of pigments; substrates and writing; and material failure. Students will make one technical presentation on a topic in one of the five areas relevant to a painting: color, optics, mechanics, composites, and stress response. In addition, they will prepare one essay on the issues surrounding the intersection of art and science. Finally, they will complete a project related to one of the thematic areas covered in the hands-on studio sessions and make a final oral presentation describing their project.

I liked the term “ligne claire” for Hergé-style drawing. I learned of it because it was mentioned in the context of Christian Kracht’s cover art.

I’m stashing away some things I’d like to read if I want to get a fuller sense of the work of Amy Sillman (though, out of these two Städelschule painting professors, I’ve always felt a gravitation toward Monika Baer), in whose studio Tamo Jugeli has begun working.

Zines https://www.amysillman.com/Zines/

On Joan Mitchell’s “Wood, Wind, No Tuba” https://www.amysillman.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/on-wood_wind_no_tuba.pdf

Writings https://www.amysillman.com/category/by/

On Cézanne drawings https://www.amysillman.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/CEZANNE_Artforum.pdf

Review of Sillman-curated show in Bern https://www.amysillman.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Curator.pdf

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If I ever get the chance to see more of the work of Léon Frédéric (forgotten painter, really, whose La Source de la vie only ended up on my wall by about three layers of dumb luck), I must leap at it.

Golden Age

The Plowman’s afternoon tea

All things die, but all will be resurrected through God’s Love (center panel)

Le ruisseau

18 February 2025

Dublin being indisputably the most inherently and immediately fun city we’ve ever set foot in, there is a reason or two why I haven’t written a word in here since leaving Los Angeles. We’ve kept our little lists elsewhere (a summary one with a mapping app, but the best one is the de facto

plot encoded in our photos with their geospatial data). I felt secure, gazing into the tiles at our last Dublin pub, Banker's (where I split my last "G"--that is, I split a "G" for my last time, but also, better, and in noting this I betray my almost superstitious sentimentality, I split the "G" that was in any case always going to be my last), in my earlier tacit decision not to sacrifice any part of the organic immediate-term remembrancing process (enregistrement-heavy, though still consisting of recollections; it's just that, when the focal sense-data is so concentrated in the near past, these recollections are so brief, sharp, clear, and immediate-term that it takes a certain distance of abstraction to even note that what they are is recollections, it feels more like sense-echos (but here we get to the convergence of those two)). In other words, I've decided to "just live" for once--a decision whose terms are absurdly unclear but whose spirit is nevertheless obvious enough.

But even still, there are certain details that I have "embalmed" incidentally, by which I mean, jarred out of the smooth subsurface trajectory of their organic reuptake into pure spirit, whether in conversation with Bella or over the phone with my parents. These include especially those quickly-evanescing ones (laced thickly with drink) involving Jakob, Anna Margrét Jónsóttir (this is her spelling--did she forget a "d"?), George, Meg (didn't she say "Meg," or was it Megan?), the duo half Portuguese and half Irish, the ladies who watched the trad band play in Gogarty's with us for a good deal more than an hour, whose names Bella is sure to remember, __ from Co. Meath and __ from Co. Mayo, striking with her red-gold eyes in that bright light over sawdust, who neither Bella nor I realized was albino but I was made to realize by Anna Margrét while Bella was not easy to convince … .

19 February 2025

In Dublin we saw a couple longboats, a once-thought pre-Roman but evidently Latin-alphabet-derived alphabet of ticks and notches on a borderpost, and so much gold. I thought of all this when, on the plane to Heathrow, I read something Thomas MacGreevy wrote about the then-"Work in Progress," the unfinished Finnegans Wake, among other contributions (Beckett, Sylvia Beach, William Carlos Williams) in Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress.

(I'd read a bit of it earlier, about Catholic art, Ulysses, and the chi rho page of the Book of Kells, actually before seeing the book itself, conditioning in a little way, on top of much deeper pulls, my experience paying visit to the stack of pages accounting for a quarter of the object. The voice is perhaps a bit truculent but at least this bit rang deep: "To an intelligent Irishman and to Mr. Joyce least of all, Catholicism is never a matter of standing on one leg. It is not a pose, it is fundamental. Consequently it has to face everything. / But the temporary Romanizers were as shocked by the unsavoury element in Ulysses as a sentimental Saracen of the middle ages might have been by the way in which Dante put popes in hell (compare, incidentally, the introduction of the phantoms of the Catholic and Church of Ireland primates into the night-town scene in Ulysses). Again Irish Catholics are not shocked by finding amongst the detail in the superb monogram page (Christi autem generatio) of the Book of Kells two rats tearing the Host from

each other with their teeth. They face the fact, as the monk who painted the page faced it, that devilry exists. The Introibo ad altare diaboli with its response To the devil which hath made glad my young days intoned by Father Malachi O'Flynn and The Reverend Mr. Love in Ulysses should be taken in exactly the same spirit as the rats in the work of the monk.")
Here's the line in connection to the Viking presence, which also made me think about how my genetic makeup is nothing more than it is Irish and Danish: "Coming thus to less vast considerations there are details of the work which, in their beauty and fitness are unsurpassed even by the finest things in Ulysses. As characters, the mysterious viking father of Dublin - Dublin was founded by the "Danes" — and his hustru (woman of the house), the wayward Anna Livia, the river Liffey, Dublin's mother, stand out above all, in some ways more than any of the whole gallery of amazing figures in the earlier work … Then there is that broth-of-a-boy Siegmund-Shaun, sometimes figuring as a cherub, sometimes imagining himself a priest, a much more muscular type of Christian than Stephen Daedalus, entirely uninfluenced by Greek or Judaistic thought, the burliest Norse-Irish convert who ever escaladed the walls of Maynooth. As for verbal beauties and fitnesses there are passages and phrases all through that have the delicate magic and dramatic force that one takes so much for granted from Mr. Joyce simply because he is Mr. Joyce. There is the first paragraph of all with the voice of Brigid answering from the turf fire, mishe ! mishe ! (I am, I am) to tauf tauf (baptise!) thuartpeatrick (peat, Patrick)."
(I'd learned about MacGreevy, and proceeded to find my way to this article, when his name came up while I was reading something else--but I can't remember whether it was about the lovely bars Davy Byrne's or Oliver St. John Gogarty, or about Beckett, whom, I believe, MacGreevy introduced to Joyce in Paris.)

21 February 2025

I cannot sleep here. I've only slept well one night, and it was before last. I enjoyed no more than four drinks and slept for the same number of hours. I woke for the last time before 5, to the sound of insistent morning birds and the deep rumble of the underground, intermittent crazed laughter too. (Deep rumble: Really, infrabroad movement only audible with ear to pillow.) I remembered Kenner about Pound, "genius enjoys long days," still not knowing whether this "enjoys" is just "receives" or "knows how to take pleasure in." So, thinking of the author of my beloved Quinzaine for This Yule and A Lume Spento, I stepped into the blue predawn to stand and look at the many addresses where he lodged.

I tend to find deep dissatisfied sadness only comes at home and in calm. Otherwise you aren't acutely present to what is lasting and not happy. But then once in a while you get your clear-eyed view of that same all-flattening emotion in distance, and that's its own unique disheartener.

And just like that, after stepping out of another station of the underground (which, by the way, is much too comfortable, calm, and affluent to warrant a shot like the one showing Derek Jacobi lodged deep in the gut-jaws of some enormous beast of sooty steel) into a morning damp but not wet, cool but not cold, I take my first sip of the hotel galley's coffee, steeped from two bags. It is darkly roasted and grainy, but so finely grainy that it could only have transported me to those mornings descending the exterior stair of Studio 6 (was that the number? Why is 4 in my head?), Bialetti soup in hand. I sat in a garden behind the church I even stepped into yesterday, unaware of these Church Walk addresses of Pound and HD and Aldington, the church of whose bells the barbarian Pound complained. It seems their building might no longer exist. I sat to eat my sandwich of what they call here bacon, which I'd in fact prefer this morning to the American meaning, buttered but dry. Breathing out my days and nights (of which it can absolutely be said that "__"—even though vortical energy is that of which I have absolutely not, this very same can be said of my days and nights) in a voice hollowed-out but not hoarse, as I do with Sebald or whomever else, I turn out to have some tendency in common with the old man who sat and clicked the buttons of his tape recorder in the Sudtirol. But even his voice in the shapes of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" does not bring consolation's (hope's) ghost to me with as much palpable presence, as much dependable faith, as did this first sip's transport. Perhaps I can seek again in this Beckett "Proust," which I finished over Wales, the reason why this comparison holds so surely.

Finding Pound's XVII beyond compare with clear-edged relation (as in that of eyelid to cheekbone) upon relation: the water green-clear and blue-clear, she with her white hounds, and again and again; to add to a note from the night before last: that Dublin is from something pronounced "Thuvlinia," meaning "black pool," so-called by the Danes who were maybe even the first to there lodge. Pound sings of "the black water before me" here in XVII too.

24 February 2025

On some mornings it takes colossal force to hold onto my injunction not to trust any perceptions or appraisals of life, my life, until I have extracted and sipped my coffee. The suppression of thought entailed, the imposition of blankmindedness, feels often like a flaying and a crushing. How can I live, I haven't the energy associated without exception with anyone who aspires to do something which I have determined is the only possible justification of my ongoing existence. You have picked a hard job, said Fraser Brough.
The following are fragments, though I want them to be more. I want them to be, finally, everything. And I have had the feeling that they could be, in delirious long hours on airplanes and blue pre-dawns, on unfamiliar streets and in the cold air I've always known I needed for real

thinking. I have felt, reading Pound's Quinzaine and Hugh Selwyn Mauberley and half his Spirit of Romance and, above all, Canzoni, that here is proof of my art, here is proof that the labor I do, the only work of which I'm capable, can, finally, amount to dazzling beauty, art of the highest order (the only order), liquid magic in that river above and around our heads in which we as entire unimaginable masses so rarely immerse them.

In this my newest pre-dawn, after this ten-hour sleep that I thought would finally restore a mental presence I have been cut off from for two weeks (the two weeks I haven't slept), the only thing in which I can join my voice in Pound's is "And I am not a demigod, I cannot make it cohere." This newest pre-dawn, when Pound's own recorded voice kept its presence in some corner of my dented mind ("Light, and the first light / Back before dew was fallen / Before ever dew was shed" (if I misquote this or elsewhere, I do not lose the music which measures his line, even if I reduce it by a degree; that is what is essential); "And there are gods upon them, bright gods, and Tuscan"; "the almond-white swimmers"*; "Water glazes the upturned nipple, / As Poggio has remarked"), with its spine still sore, the discomfort of a three-minute piss at three and another at six, the fire-alarm headache that migrates straight down into the stomach and becomes noise-nausea, "everything is wrong" I said unable to pony up the colossal force necessary to hold onto my injunction, and meanwhile then on a different plane entirely (the only plane, the one which holds me), Bella turned into joy Love's sorrow (which sorrow I've only just yesterday come to learn how to turn (it, too) into the everglowing core of perfect art--learned in Rudel's initial epitomization, and in Castiglione's "Alcon" (and later even in the voices of his oft-erring but ever-in-touch (through their author's genius, visible--obviuous, unmistakable--in Raphael's portrait of him, gone in Rubens's copy) courtiers among whose voices his Book is lacingly fanned out), and from all the rest of that spirit which he named in that book and revived, made all-changingly alive, in Canzoni (though it was already there in A Lume Spento, even, and even (the very same was) in Joyce's Chamber Music, which ends with the "And I hear an army charging upon the land" which must certainly have forced Pound to recognize in it, too, the same spirit, and in that moment to regret having put "Don'ts" to a doctrine).

[* To this one, in especiality, I was prompted in an epiphanic setting-in of an understanding of the abstraction and the gap bridged in the operation of the trobar of the objective-correlative--that is, how the almond-white shoulder need not be Shakespear's nor Rudge's nor a Venetian girl's ("one face," "not 'those girls'" (Canto III)) nor anyone's but a nymph glimpsed by a centuries-dead other nor, therefore, anyone's at all (it is thus that Pound can be the artist of the most beautiful poetry in centuries even if he never truly personally loved, was never, that is, sainted for his life with his bride--it is thus that he could write "her whose lips have bade mine own be blest, / My bride, 'The dawn reflected in the west,'"** having then or perhaps ever no such bride (and in this, it is illuminating, the inverted commas which, in delocalizing or historicizing or auraticizing the naming, reaffirm this my observation about the floating aspect of the found objective-correlative)--it is thus that is resolved what held me yesterday (see below) in the difficulty around the de Quincey quote about "one man's feeling a thing more keenly"--it is, of course, also thus that I continue living in his art's light even against the absurdity of his wartime broadcasts, his civilization-historic theories which long predate them (that is, his ongoingly nauseating racism and Jew hatred)).]

[** These lines are preceded by two ("Pray I, her mating hallowed in God's sight / That none asunder me with bale of might / From her") that I read shortly after having contemplated, with deep pain in my stomach, prompted by a film adaptation a mother watched in the row in front of

me, Hector's thoughts of Andromache as traversed by Achilles' spear he sank to his knees. Hector's thoughts, I imagine, went to where, in her long lament that fills the end of the twenty-second book of the epic, Andromache's did not go, though they went far and wide after she recovered from a moment's night; they went to all, to Astyanax chiefly, but scarce to her own now-certain fate.]
So, the fragments. (How to get between these two, in Canto the hundred-sixteenth, separated by just a sheaf of lines?

"Unprepared young burdened with records,
The vision of the Madonna
  above the cigar butts
      and over the portal.
"Have made a mass of laws"
      (mucchio di leggi)
Litterae nihil sanantes
  Justinian's,
a tangle of works unfinished.
I have brought the great ball of crystal;
who can lift it?
Can you enter the great acorn of light?
  But the beauty is not the madness
Tho' my errors and wrecks lie about me.
And I am not a demigod,
I cannot make it cohere.
If love be not in the house there is nothing."

…

"to "see again,"
the verb is "see," not "walk on"
i.e. it coheres all right
  even if my notes do not cohere."

I feel obliged to show the intervening lines. Maybe in what he learned from Laforgue "since then," maybe there is what bridges these two sequential "shots" above (as in cinema, kinema, as I noticed in all his Cathay translations: successive present-tense images establish movement, but a particular movement; each present (each image) is eternal, not not replaced like moments in time (as they are conventionally understood), and yet still there is a movement (a music) between them, that makes the other from the one. So here is what intervenes:

"to "see again,"

the verb is "see," not "walk on"
i.e. it coheres all right
  even if my notes do not cohere.”

And here is what closes, following after “... even if my notes do not cohere”; I show it as the very vision of hope, rest, hope and rest, toward which I am always reaching, always looking ahead from just under my upper eyelids or from the top of the corner of my eye, at which I never am.

“Many errors,
a little rightness,
to excuse his hell
  and my paradiso.
And as to why they go wrong,
  thinking of rightness
And as to who will copy this palimpsest?
  al poco giorno
      ed al gran cerchio d'ombra
But to affirm the gold thread in the pattern
  (Torcello)
al Vicolo d'oro
  (Tigullio).
To confess wrong without losing rightness:
Charity I have had sometimes,
  I cannot make it flow thru.
A little light, like a rushlight
  to lead back to splendour.”

(Awash in Pound I am not thinking as myself, and I am least of all painting. But--“I am not thinking of myself” ought not to read as the discouragement by which I seem to have meant it, the reduction to simple discouragement it might read as. No--I’m never “as myself,” not really; grasping at it amounts to (really) the same as at “equality with God” (this is Paul), that which he (son of man) did “not”; and if I still find discouragement in the fact that my own “Personæ” do not typologize as neatly as did Pound’s (image below, inserted, after-before the manner of Hantaï, on the last page of Umbra), then this is (in fact; in this spirit) an improvement, not another one of these degrees of inferiority, insufficiency. Note, incidentally, that the bibliography below it bears signs--this is its “palimpsest”--of revisionary omissions.)

Now is the time--there is no other--to draw out all the wordless notes I made on yesterday's plane, just because today and tomorrow differ more greatly w/r/t the accessibility of these than to any of the more important memories that need to be arranged at painstaking length.

In Dublin a sign explained "the angel's share," a phrase from whiskey distillers to describe the reduction in potency measured across a certain portion of the process.

A glorious image, this angel.

This is my kind of angel: bacchic, not male and not female but in no wise for this sexless, certainly not, because then it could not show the terror it showed Rilke. Bacchic: Like the nurture of that infant in one of the National Gallery's countless Poussins; I brought Bella to it because how else could you achieve an image this strong, strong for its never appearing (the taboo of an otherwise very real cruelty, circumvented by the unique nature of this very strange infant, circumvented as are countless other taboos in representations of the infant Christ described in Steinberg's work that I still have not read but which will bring many of my paintings to life). "He loves it!" she said of the child at drink, and we talked with smiles of the thought of him arriving to our own sumposion.

On the plane, I wrote, "Two things Fraser Brough told me: first, about the two kinds of artist, C Dunham (and Raphael Egil) typefying the one. After my mention of Dunham and our agreement on how nice it would be to be to have such productivity, further illustrated by his example of Egil where Proust could have been interchanged with Hitler (was it?), he said "but then, the paintings are just art about art; this can be beautiful, of course, but it is just one kind of art." And link this to something with which im still trying to sort myself: Pound's insistence on the utter value of "one man's feeling a thing more keenly, understanding it more deeply, than it has ever been felt before" (this is De Quincey qtd. Spirit of Romance 231-232; the whole two paragraph passage—see photo—is germane). Pound has been called, on these grounds, essentially Romantic. It's difficult to argue otherwise, but I think it must be done, and I think this is how: That the keenest feeling, the deepest understanding, is not end but means; that the true end, for the consummate furtherance of which these constitute the uniquely supreme vehicle, is the crystalline clarity of the craft-wrought object. Hence my unfortunately named micro-encounters, and nothing ever into my paintings except through their sieve, their crible, their crucible, their still.

The other comment: On the lateness of British taste, in general, typified by the egregious mismanagement of assets by the Tate; one instance being, also, the utter ignorance of Eilshemius, hence the argument of his current show; I wanted to point out that Pound had said the very same thing more than a hundred years prior.

His talk was full of treasure, and we did not outstay our welcome, but eventually Cassius had to go home."

Brough also immediately went for the phrase “angelic figure” in his description of Hardy Hill, after I made mention of him by way of explaining my presence there.
I want to put it into a trio, a bouquet of aspectual portraits.
Second is a quote on the poet Lionel Johnson: “Johnson was a walking paradox: a childlike sage, a morally sensitive alcoholic, a thoroughly English Celt, a decadent Catholic.” (I had to look into him after I read in “Mauberley,” “the pure mind / Arose toward Newman as the whiskey warmed.”)
Third, last, best, what Pound said of Mark Antony Flaminius. One of his Poeti Latini (a chapter in Spirit of Romance). “At the papal court young Mark was favourably received by the Pope and his cardinals. One says that he was ‘learned and awkward,’ another that he was ‘amiable and bashful,’ while the Cardinal of Aragon, ‘charmed with his manners and talent,’ says that Mark fearlessly disputed with the Pontiff himself” (239).
All of these are words I wanted to aspire to claim for myself, if I am to be forced to have an image. The epithet “angel complex” be damned (this new to me when Anna Margrét Jónsdóttir used it, I remember not why).

Note that all the rest are fragments truly, not interlinked to anything, let alone everything:

When I wrote sumposion above, I found this fresco from “the tomb of the diver” at an Italian Greek colony; its colors are nicely Mycenaean, reminding me of Grotjahn at Casa Malaparte and all (Etruscan, de Kooning, Mesopotamian idols, Antibes Picasso and all) that I hold in unity with that there. But behold the diver himself (and then the schema), and affix him to one of my oscillating bathings.

I felt grateful for the scarce-parallelled opportunity to imagine the waves at Portmarnock as black horses with their white hair combed back wickedly by the wind, Eliot’s “I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each. // I do not think that they will sing to me. // I have seen them riding seaward on the waves / Combing the white hair of the waves blown back / When the wind blows the water white and black.”

My telephone had a GPS which let me know, at some point on the plane, that the globe around me looked all silvery like this from space, that below me was “Semersooq,” and that the temperature there was -10 Fahrenheit.

On the plane I remembered a classmate of mine, not his name but an image of him, and my fondness. There are individuals the mere thought of whom can bring me to tears. An employee of a company I applied to work for in December; Toby from The Office. And Eyüp Eren Yürek. Each for a completely unrelated set of reasons, I think. I tried to read online what he is doing now. It seems he’s in a management position at CESTA, helping Elaine Treharne (I remember Danny was always intimidated by her) with a digitization of a 20th-century Oxford scholar’s work on Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. It sounds perfect. At bios for himself he’d written, and at photos of his smile, my heart and stomach are curiously deeply moved.

I had to open the web app I used for that course to find his name. In the process I caught sight of something I’d written for homework. It might even be a thought worth retaining, sound if not grand. In any case the subject is one that still spans itself among the most central axial strings in my heart. “I think one interesting dimension along which to compare the troubadours and the dolce stil nuovo poets is the different forms which they give to expressions of morality. In speaking of “Al cor gentil rempaira sempre amore,” Martinez notes Guinizelli’s “precise and melodious use of the language of the schools” (281). Though this comment passes quite quickly, I believe that “the schools” he is referring to here are universities such as that of Bologna (Guinizelli’s own city), and not the new Italian poetry communities such as “the Sicilian school.” If I’m correct, then perhaps an example of this influence of the language of academic moral disputation is found in the poem’s closing lines: “Then may I plead: “As though from Thee he came, / Love wore an angel’s face: Lord, if I loved her, count it not my shame” (this is Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s translation). This kind of reasoning is evidently much more refined than the moralizing with which we are familiar in Marcabru, whose “conceptismo” Martinez also cites as an influence for Guinizelli. Above all, I think the distance is marked by the fact that Guinizelli’s poem is ultimately an argument for permission, whereas, as far as I’m aware, Marcabru’s morality is always expressed as condemnation.”

Guido Guinezelli right next to Cavalcanti, then: i Guidi, my guides.

I often favor, using just these abstractions as stand-ins for the poems I don’t often fully conjure to mind, “the Sicilian school” over the “dolce stil novo.” Who knows whether, for the purposes of my painting, this imbalance ought to stand in this way. But I add that, for the Sicilians, Giacomo da Lentini’s canzone whose monoverbal first line is “Meravigliosamante” can, for now, be emblematic, taking, as it does, la Peinture as its central topos.

Meravigliosa-mente
un amor mi distringe
e soven ad ogn'ora.
Com'omo che ten mente
in altro exemplo pinge
la simile pintura,
cosí, bella, facc'eo,
che 'nfra lo core meo
porto la tua figura.

In cor par ch'eo vi porti,
pinta come parete,
e non pare di fore;
o Deo, co' mi par forte
non so se vi savete,
com' v'amo di bon core,
ca son sì vergognoso
ca pur vi guardo ascoso,
e non vi mostro amore.

Avendo gran disio
dipinsi una pintura,
bella, voi simigliante,
e quando voi non vio
guardo 'n quella figura,
par ch'eo v'aggia avante:
sì com'om che si crede
salvare per sua fede,
ancor non via davante.

Al cor m'ard'una doglia,
com'om che te-lo foco
a lo suo seno ascoso,
quando più lo 'nvoglia,
tanto arde più loco
e non pò stare incluso:
similemente eo ardo
quando pass'e non guardo
a voi, vis'amoroso.

S'eo guardo quando passo,
inver'voi no mi giro,
bella, per risguardare;
andando, ad ogni passo
sì getto uno sospiro
che facemi ancosciare;
e certo bene ancoscio,
ch'a pena mi conoscio,
tanto bella mi pare.

Assai v'aggio laudato,
madonna, in tutte parti
di bellezze ch'avete.
Non so se v'è contato
ch'eo lo faccia per arti,
che voi ve ne dolete:
sacciatelo per signa
zo ch'e' voi dire' a linga,
quando voi mi vedite.

Canzonetta novella,
và canta nova cosa;
lèvati da maitino
davanti a la piú bella,
fiore d'ogn'amorosa,
bionda piú ch'auro fino:
«Lo vostro amor, ch'è caro,
donatelo al Notaro
ch'è nato da Lentino».

Wonderfully
a love binds
and possesses me at every hour,
Like one who keeps a model in his mind
and depicts
a similar likeness,
so, beautiful lady, do I,
because, inside my heart
I carry your image.

I seem to carry in my heart,

your painted likeness,
which is not apparent from outside.
O God, how hard it seems!
I don't know if you know
with what true heart I love you,
for I am so timid
that I watch you in secret
and do not show my love.

Having great desire
I painted a painting,
beautiful lady, of your likeness,
and when I don't see you,
I look upon that image,
and it seems you are before me,
like someone who believes
himself saved through faith,
when he cannot see the way.

In my heart a pain is burning,
like to one who keeps a fire
hidden in his breast.
The more he tries to stifle it,
it burns more widely
and cannot be contained.
Likewise I burn
when I pass and do not look
at you, lovely visage.

If do I pass and look at you
and do not turn around
to look at you again,
beautiful lady,
at every step
I cast a sigh
and am filled so much anguish
that I surely recognize
that I hardly know myself,
so beautiful do you appear to me.

I have praised you so greatly,

my Lady, everywhere
for the beauties you possess.
I don't know if you've been told
that I do it just for art's sake,
and that this pains you.
But you may know through signs
what I would say with my tongue,
when you see how I appear.

O fresh and new little song,
go and sing something new.
Rise up early in the morning
before the most beautiful -
the flower of all the lovelies --
blonder than fine gold:
«Give your love, that is so precious,
to the notary
who was born in Lentini.»

I looked for Sellaio's "Venus Reclining," because it is cited in a footnote to (i.e., as the substructure of) two Canzoni poems, "The Picture" and "Of Jacopo del Sellaio." I don't believe I found it, but I found this, stunning, a perfect talisman.

It's a Turner under the same title; it's at the Tate, but, of course, I didn't see it there, hidden jealously away, along with the rest of the bulk (and the best) of their egregiously large collection (a worse travesty, I think, than the Nahmads' airport hangars).
And I found, in looking, this other Sellaio, whose stags remind me of certain Uccello passages where a form is unmistakably a mathematically-precise projection of a specific three-dimensional object, but the gradation of its coloring is decidedly flat; placed in a window-world, particularly one as rich as this one, the effect is exhilarating. It also reminds of certain damaged works of Andrei Rublev, and certain unfinished works of Leonardo.

In the airport, over security, there hung something--a quilt, a tapestry, I don't know--that

charmed me, and its words were the ending of this Seamus Heaney poem, “From Lightenings.” The mind goes to the Kells monks on Iona, Scottish island with Mediterranean waters.

Incidentally, I am quite fond of the way the oblique perpendiculars fall in this cropping. It could even be something.

“Talk of Tipperary” a phrase presented, whole, to my waking mind this pre-dawn (today), and therefore graftable into my oscillating What have I been calling it if such an endeavor has any purpose. (Someone, on a bus or at an airport, yesterday, a thirty-two hour day, answered someone else’s question, where she was from.)

In this Giorgionesque Titian, Miracle of the Jealous Husband, it has been said that the raised arm of the murdered-then-resuscitated was actually raised in relief, not illusionistically painted. What an exception.

In the Pompidou a “Grand paysage à l'arbre (Cour de ferme à Chassy)” (1960) reveals a similarity between Balthus’s hand and that of the Lewis of the flesh and cloth and walls and glass in the portraits of Eliot and Pound (that one Lewis that I’ve cared about). The Centre says, in somewhat redundant English (all they do is mask oft-noted debts with obvious observations--but then what else do we do, any of us) “The apparent naturalism of the composition tends more toward a philosophical landscape, after the fashion of Nicolas Poussin, with the tiered landscapes of fields in the distance evoking the composition of paintings by Piero della Francesca, the Renaissance painter.” Isabelle Monod-Fontaine says, extracted by the Centre just below, somewhat more. Her “zébrures” were at the heart of my initial observation, perhaps the very first flicker of the optic nerve that sent me down a rememorative thought track leading back to this Lewis. “À partir de 1953, Balthus réside à Chassy, un château entouré de dépendances et de fermes, dans la Nièvre. Il y peint de nombreux paysages, notamment six vues prises de la fenêtre surplombant les deux cours de la ferme. Le tableau du Musée (cat. rais. no P 314) est le dernier de cette série (voir aussi Étude pour cour de ferme à Chassy, Colmar, Musée d’Unterlinden), l’ultime vue de Chassy peinte avant son départ pour Rome et la Villa Médicis, en 1961. Il y reprend, en l’élargissant, le cadrage d’une toile de 1954. Un froid soleil d’hiver baigne la moitié supérieure du tableau – la zone des champs, au-delà de l’enceinte – et pénètre en deux ou trois zébrures l’ombre de la cour. Un petit personnage vu de dos, en bas à gauche, à peine visible dans

l’ombre, est la seule présence humaine dans cet ordonnancement géométrique d’une beauté abstraite. Balthus a en effet minutieusement agencé les lignes de construction : les volumes cubiques et les orthogonales des bâtiments, des portails et des piliers, contrastent avec les obliques croisées des parcelles cultivées sur la colline et avec le souple réseau des branches du grand arbre. Travail de recomposition qui transforme le portrait d’un lieu familier en un paysage « philosophique », au sens de Poussin ou de Piero Della Francesca. La peinture y a partie liée avec sa propre histoire, mais aussi avec le temps plus long des sédimentations géologiques, avec les cycles des saisons et des travaux qui leur sont associés depuis toujours. À Chassy, Balthus aborde aussi de nouvelles recherches techniques, tentant déjà de retrouver des effets de fresque ou de mur par la superposition de nombreuses couches de tempera à la caséine.”

Did I see enough of Howth Castle to spin from it my own “,” building from analogues to Balthus’s “volumes cubiques et les orthogonales des bâtiments, des portails et des piliers, [contrastants] avec les obliques croisées des parcelles cultivées sur la colline et avec le souple réseau des branches du grand arbre” ?

It took much maneuvering to achieve from it this angle this alignment, for example:

And there has to be a way to layer into that image all the liquid magic that subtends it for me: Its grass being the apotheosis of the sunlit smoothness of Shady Valley, its rhododendron forest (I’m not sure whether I saw them, they were dormant, maybe it was their shoots which poked everywhere up from the wet black mulch) which was Yeats’s childhood memory of shaded sleep and Joyce’s Bloom’s own recollection* superposed under Joyce’s Molly’s final-word “Yes”-recollection** and taken up again as the “head” of that HCE whose phallus is at the entrance to Phoenix Park and whose feet stick up somewhere well off to the west.

To layer into it everything, all the rumbling of “I hear an army charging upon the land” in all the green, all the filamentary lineaments of which it is emblematic (I hesitate at this last word), and the few details of it which I saw and recorded with my strange pen, the tree on the second floor of the righthand entry turret, the carved dragon (is it?) with a head pointing one way at each end on a gate opposite, to the left of that magically wet-lit ring Bella dared not enter (if you’ve turned your back to the ground-gulfed tree, that is).

[* “... Hidden under wild ferns on Howth. Below us bay sleeping sky. No sound. The sky. The bay purple by the Lion’s head. Green by Drumleck. Yellowgreen towards Sutton. Fields of undersea, the lines faint brown in grass, buried cities. Pillowed on my coat she had her hair, earwigs in the heather scrub my hand under her nape, you'll toss me all. O wonder! Coolsoft with ointments her hand touched me, caressed: her eyes upon me did not turn away. Ravished over her

I lay, full lips open, kissed her …”]

[** “... ah yes I know them well who was the first person in the universe before there was anybody that made it all who ah that they dont know neither do I so there you are they might as well try to stop the sun from rising tomorrow the sun shines for you he said the day we were lying among the rhododendrons on Howth head in the grey tweed suit and his straw hat the day I got him to propose to me yes first I …]

Etc. (an ellipsis on par, for scale of encompassment, with “and environs”).

These last two were viewed from the same spot; the latter, due in some way in part to the uphill on a golf green, captures a particular sort of vertigo I don't believe I've ever known.

The evening before, we'd seen it unexpectedly and uniquely bluntly modern-weirdly, from up here where it was ringed in ozone-blue (the same blue of those waters on certain days, it must be) and awash in the same golden sunlight that saffron'd certain of Pound's clouds and also mine, near end of the flight after this, over Moapa, NV, apparently, though this color couldn't be had with a camera, mine then nor any.

Back to Balthus: Some author chooses this detail of a Piero (Constantine's dream at Arezzo) to cite for the "géométrisation des corps" that Piero permanently marked Balthus with. What is it that Kenner said Lewis did to Pound and Eliot? Something about Euclid at work under and on the painted skin. (I also attach, in passing, a link from Piero to Pound that completes this triangle or quadrangle: the last line of "Mauberley," the final envoi excepted "the contemplation / of Pierian roses," which "the sale of half-hose / has long since superseded" in London at the time of writing. But was this really the link I thought it was, or rather a nod to (Pope's) "Pierian Spring" or again Hesiod's "Pierian" muses?) I believe no flesh will be able to find its true way into my paint without passage through this same crible, glimpsed sides of Bellas nor any lifted (copied, traced with eye held away from my own silverpoint) from painting past, painting ghost.

The same author cites an Artaud work I didn't know of, whose terms are fully appropriable for my "re-Symbolism," terms better than anything I've come up with (my "re-" damns me as surely as does that in "Celtic Revival," or any "neo-"-logism, etc.). "Dans ses Messages révolutionnaires (publié en 1979, rédigé en 1936), Antonin Artaud consacre un article à « La jeune peinture française et la tradition ». Il y est principalement question de Balthus, dont il est fait l'éloge, présenté comme « ascète », « surnaturel » (c'est-à-dire plus-que-surréaliste), et comme l'un des rares représentants d'une peinture de la « révélation », opposée à une tradition de la renaissance dite de « représentation ».

God is: Giganto, a giant circus elephant. (To GGG?)
I am: Some random echo. (To Eliza.)
I am: The anti-modern religious American, an archetype.
I am: A pawn of the savage sea, A plaything of the deep
I desire in vain: Placid harbor, for two boats side by side.

25 February 2025

And now there are these notes from several things I read.

Pound's Spirit of Romance, revisited; reading maybe another 40% of it, leaving 20% still unperused.

231, in the Camoens chapter, I loved this pair of sentences: "When Pedro succeeded to the throne, he had her body exhumed, and the Court did homage, the grandees of Portugal passing before the double throne of the dead queen and her lord, and kissing that hand which had been hers. A picture of the scene hangs in the new gallery at Madrid, with that great series of canvasses which commemorate the splendid horrors of the Spanish past."

231-232, here is what I pointed down to above, de Quincey and the bringing to a head, maybe for the first time this directly, the question of Pound's possible striking of a blend or relation between Romantic lamp-art (expression) and the essentially Symbolist fabbro-art that unquestionable beautycraft like his really can lay claim to. "The further narrative, with the comparison to the wilted daisy, is beautiful and full of music; but it is the beauty of words and cadences, and of expression, not the beauty of that subtler understanding which is genius, and the dayspring of the arts. How wise is De Quincey, when he speaks of the 'miracle which can be wrought simply by one man's feeling a thing more keenly, understanding it more deeply, than it has ever been felt before.' In this pass fails Camoens, for all his splendour, and with him fail the authors of the Renaissance. It is true that he felt the glory of Portugal as no other poet has felt it. But this glory was short-lived. / Every age, every lustrum, yields its crop of pleasant singers, who know the rules, and who write beautiful language and regular rhythms; poetry completely free from the cruder faults: but the art of writing poetry which is vitally interesting, this is a matter for masters. The above has for so long been platitude that no one recognizes more than the surface of it."

I loved the topos here and its textures, and it needs to be added onto what I am for some reason gathering, between Nabokov's merman-work and The Tempest. "Those who enjoy the submarine parts of Keats' "Endymion" will probably enjoy, for contrast and com-parison, that part of the sixth canto of " Os Lusiadas" which treats of Bacchus' visit to Neptune. " No mas interno fundo das profundos / Cavernas altas, onde o mar se esconde / La donde as ondas sahem

furibundas / Quando as iras do vento o mar responde." There is a fine thunderous resonance about it. "In th' inmost deep of the profound / High caverns, where the sea doth hide him, / There, whence the waves come forth in madness, / When to the wraths of wind the sea respondeth." / Here dwells the lord of the trident; behind golden gates inlaid with seed pearl; and hereris the gentle reader introduced to all the deities, and demi-deities, whose acquaintance he has not already made in the lofty courts of Jove."

This makes me aware of Carducci for the first time, and the line reminds me what was best in common among Verlaine, Mallarmé, and le Sidaner (a painting by whom, incidentally, I saw at the Hugh Lane in Dublin; his magic proves true repeatedly). Here a crystalline play of reflections, the possible translation of whose simile into painting is not obvious, but whose latter image, at least, would add something to the Symbolist sheaf of themes. I paste also an apropos Cranston, his belovedly titled "Painting makes nothing happen." "... two lines of that modern Italian whose beautiful cold intellect we, outside of Italy, are so slow in praising. "Come in chiare acque albor lontan di stella / Ridea l'alma ne gli occhi e trasparia." "Juvenalia," i. xi. " Her soul smiles in her eyes and showeth through them / As in clear waters the far whiteness of a star."

I paste this because I was taken aback by Castiglione's poetry, which I'd never read, and did not guess could be so sweet. I am deeply won over, won towards desire for imitation, by the insistence of the Renaissance's personification--and in this is implicated a countless net of other poets spanning many more centuries--of here the fates (in the last quoted lines), elsewhere other abstractions the figuration of which (of whom) is a much more vital tradition today than any narcissistic (identity-fixated) representation.* I paste Raphel's fragmentary words because they, too, contain a rare sweetness. "The lament of Baldassare Castiglione (that "courteous prince of Mantua, civitium ocelle, known to all as the author of "Il Cortegiano") for the painter whom he loved, re-echoes the spirit of the times' desire. "De Morte Raphaelis Pictoris (transcription of part of the poem) "Unto our city Rome, sore wounded / By the sword and flame and flow of years, / Thou did'st bring back that rare, lost beauty / That was hers of old. Thou did'st scorn / The laws that bind us lesser mortals / And dared'st lead back a soul unto its earthly dwelling, / And the spirit unto this our poor dead city ; / Wherefore were the very high gods angry / With thee, O Raphael, and took thee from us / While thy years were yet as flowers." The reference to restoring Rome's lost beauty does not, in all probability, refer to Raphael's painting, but to a certain matter of which he had written to the Count Baldassare in these words :
"His Holiness, in doing me honour, has laid a heavy burden upon my shoulders, which is the care and charge of building St Peter's . . . the model I have made pleases his Holiness." "I would fain find out the fine forms of the antique buildings." "I do not know whether I am attempting to fly

like Icarus." "Vitruvius gives me great light but not sufficient."”
[* Cavalcanti may be foremost among those “other poets spanning many more centuries” insistent on such personification. His Amore, painted in persona not rarely, has a unique potency to move my heart up toward my throat, having to do with the way it prismatically splays an atomic dyad intact, make newly perceptible by objective-correlative that immortal binary pulsar (call it amour courtois or Love tout court) without damage to the biopsied (the biopsied sprawling on a pin, the biopsied’s nerves as if thrown in patterns on a screen by a magic lantern: these are, in fact, Eliot’s figures for the operation of art itself, the operation of the objective-correlative). For this same Amore and its capacity to dilate certain vessels--carotid, subclavian--there are three London paintings, one I saw (but which I cannot now find, though I tried long) and two hidden from me (shown below), and, by implication, the best others that share their theme (the vertiginous premise of coupling mortal with love himself, beauty herself).]

And still on the same subject: I wanted to quotate from something of Pound, likely from Canzoni, this, where I marked how Amore here attains the strength of personality that death himself or decay himself or disease himself attains in each of the Nosferatus. “Who is she coming with a light upon her / Not born of suns that with the day's end end? / Say is it Love who hath chosen the nobler part / Say is it Love, that was divinity, / Who hath left his godhead that his home might be / The shameless rose of her unclouded heart? / If this be Love, where hath he won such grace? / If this be Love, how is the evil wrought, / That all men write against his darkened name? / If this be Love, if this … // O mind give place! / What holy mystery e'er was noosed in thought? / Own that thou scan'st her not, nor count it shame!
Then, on another of these poeti latini, of which Castiglione is one, this quotation which gives to me a reglimpse of a poetic theme I treasured in adolescence, when my father played me the Magdalene’s song from Andrew Lloyd Weber (in a work I haven’t otherwise heard). Incidentally, we have also here a treasurable contribution to my bathing project. “I can place over the collections of Toscanus and Gherus, and over the period of Latin singing represented therein, no more fitting inscription than Andrea Navgeri's rune for a fountain: "Inscriptio Fontis " Lo! the fountain is cool and none more hale of waters. / Green is the land about it, soft with the grasses. / And twigged boughs of elm stave off (arceo) the sun. / There is no place more charmed with light-blown airs, / Though Titan in utmost flame doth hold the middle sky, / And the parched fields burn with the oppressing star. / Stay here thy way, voyager, for terrible is now the heat ; / Thy tired feet can go no further now. / Balm here for weariness is sweet reclining, / Balm 'gainst the heat, the winds, and greeny shade ! / And for thy thirst the lucid fount's assuaging."

I have reproduced the first part of this already but on 239 Pound gives attributes to Marcantonio Flaminio which are of personal significance to me. “At the papal court young Mark

was favourably received by the Pope and his cardinals. One says that he was "learned and awkward," another that he was "amiable and bashful," while the Cardinal of Aragon, " charmed with his manners and talent," says that Mark fearlessly disputed with the Pontiff himself. / In the poems of Mark Antony Flaminius we find signs of the scholar's sensitiveness to nature, both to the natural things themselves and to those spiritual presences therein, which age after age finds it most fitting to write of in the symbolism of the old Greek myth-ology. Gently and sincerely religious, we find Flaminius the friend of most of the brilliant men in Italy,; among these were Valdez, the Spanish reformer, and Cardinal Pole. His religious quality, or the quality of his religion, can be seen in his Hymnus III. : "Ut flos tenellos, in sinu / Telluris almae, lucidam / Formosus explicat comam / Si ros et imber educat / Illum: tenella mens mea / Sic foret, almi spiritus / Dum rore dulci pascitur / Hoc illa si caret, statim / Languescit ut flos arida / Tellure natus, eum nisi / Et ros et imber educat." HYMN III: " As a fragile and lovely flower unfolds its gleaming foliage on the breast-fold of the fostering earth, if the dew and rain draw it forth; thus doth my tender mind flourish if it be fed with the sweet dew of the Fostering Spirit. / "Lacking this, it straightway beginneth to languish even as a flower born upon dry earth, if the dew and the rain tend it not." This prose translation is modelled upon that in the "Scholar's Vade Mecum," by John Norton, an odd, egotistical little book printed in 1674."

Following immediately upon the above, but notable for separate reasons, there is this: "For the pagan side of Flaminius' poetry, I give you one simile from the "Hercules and Hylas," where Hylas, "being a-wandered in the silent hills," comes to the "fountain filled with little gleamings." The nymphs seize him and bear him quickly away beneath the waters. "As once in the splendour of the spring-time / A flying star drooped through the gloom of the night / Shone forth, then sank in the sea-deep."" This I note, in particular, because it connects to a sculpture I saw in the Tate, not in particular a beautiful one, but one which furnished for me a certain sculptural sensation, that is a spatio-temporalized (kinetically proprioceptive) body-sensation. Its theme was the same. Hylas, here, was distinctly smaller than the nymphs. His head with its eyes had, I recall, a telling upward clination, charged with the very totality of the erotic situation which the work's sole reality was to encode. The nymphs, all three, were evenly thick around the "hinder cheeks,"* all the radii measuring this latitude's volume having the same notable generosity, even while they maintained the idealized proportion and surface cohesion that constitute Rubens's opposite. I moved through this marble's space, participated its situation, felt fully the single and singular note to which it was so tautly tuned, the ropy catgut (as that of a cello) moving with its utter precision and univocality that one area inside my chest, just behind the front panel of my ribs. (I yet insist it wasn't a beautiful instance of art, wasn't a work of unitary genius: Witness its handicapping fig leaf.)

[* At least I think this is what Nabokov means when Kinbote describes "ombrioles" which "combined exquisite beauty with highly indecent subject matter--nudities blending with fig trees, oversize ardors, softly shaded hinder cheeks, and also a dapple of female charms" (Pale Fire 141 note 408).]

Still with Flaminio, on 240-241, Pound touches on a large nuance which I can't fail to account for in all my accounting (of Love, the dolce stil novo, and everything among and around). "The nature-worship and the abandonment of the chivaleric love mode, which mark the definite break with mediaeval tradition, are easily perceptible in the following fragments of Flaminius:— "To the Dawn 'Behold from the Earth's rim cometh Eoe ! / Aurora resplendent draweth the rose of her chariot, / In her flushed bosom she beareth the far-gleaming light. / Be gone ye wan shades

unto Orcus ! / Be gone ye dread faces of the manes / Who all night long bring to me dreams and foreboding. / Now bring the bard his lyre, O Slave, / And scatter flowers while I sing : / “Salve, Bona Diva, thou that makest luminous / Dark lands with the might of thy splendour. / Thine are the fragile violets and crocuses ! / Thine are the wicker baskets of fragrant Amomon ! / The wind ariseth and beareth to thee our sweet perfumes / … / Goddess fairer than all other goddessess, / Rose-cheeked, when thou dost spread forth / Thy golden hair along the sky / Then flee the tawny stars / And the moon's pale beauty waneth. / Lacking thee were all things lacking colour, / And mortals were buried in gloom, / Nor would our life bear flower in the skilful arts. / Thou drivest sleep from our sluggard eyes, / Sleep that is image of Lethe."”

And still continuously, 241-242, I cannot omit to reproduce this, because its makings-strong are too powerful to abandon, its Giorgionesque “elements” and primordial-true centering (posing, as in Rilke’s core sheaf of postures) of ritual, ritual like this: “In another poem of the night is the following :—"It thunders, the grove groaneth for the greatness of the wind, the multitude of the rains pour down. Night with her sleep-bearing winds is round about us, and is blind. The cloak of strange cloud-forms maketh dark the earth." / Flaminius loves the feel of the elements; he knows also that the land he dwells in is haunted by the shades of those Roman singers from whom he has learned his ways of song; whence this to the haunts of Catullus : "O pleasing shore of Sirmio, / White-shining hill of Catullus! / O Muse, teach me to sing the praise / Of the blest sylvan ways / Citrus laden, and of Lesbia the fair. / Lo! in the flower-filled vale of Taburnus / Stands an altar to thee, / Green and cut from the turf. [And I think here, indelibly, of the ringed hedge which foreboded Bella, at a plane just away and just below from the front court of Howth Castle.] / Thrice from the foam-filled bowl we pour / Thee milk, and thrice of the honey's store. / Suppliant do our voices call thee, / Goddess, to an unskilled sacrifice, / That thy reed pipe sweetly tuned may / Sing for her, the fairest maid of all the meadland, / Our Hyellas."

Soon after, Buonarrotti becomes one of the poeti latini, and the quotation is, for me, an indispensable pillar of the great account I am always at work on in words. If I do not always find myself able to find in Michelangelo pinnacles of the art (my art, that is, la Peinture)--finding in his frescoes, rather, deeply moving notes (like that in the Hylas-Nymphs at the Tate, for the first example to hand), thunderous ones such as the Romantics would adore, even if his tondo does, once, attain a strange perfection, as Steinberg marks--he becomes, for this, a valuable pillar of that inherency of art which is to negate identity, break down selfhood, expose our being for what Nancy and even Heidegger (in his imperfect way) saw in it, giving lie to Cartesian subject and all refinements thereof. The means happen to be a distinctive torsion of sex, a gut-dizzying play of “within,” doing to sex-space what Michael Angelo Bala (the coincidence of names is serendipitous; first to mind was “Bala,” and only after that the realization) does to carpentried doorjambs and other home trappings. “‘A man within a woman, nay a God / Speaks through her spoken word ; / I therefore who have heard / Must suffer change, and shall be mine no more. / She lured me from the paths I whilhom trod, / Borne from my former state by her away, / I stand aloof, and mine own self deplore. / Above all vain desire / The beauty of her face doth lift my clay, / All lesser loveliness seems charnal mire. / O Lady, who through fire / And water leadest souls to joy serene, / Let me no more unto myself return.’ But Michael Agnolo is against the spirit of the time. [This is indeed curious to note, and explanatory of the pillar-status already marked above:] He preferred Dante to Bembo. In him survive the Middle Ages; in a totally different way we find a mediæval quality in the Franciscan temper of Flaminius.”

I paste this because the unfamiliar names among these are certainly not to be missed. On a

different plane: It is curious, but what I map as “the transalpine”--likewise a survival, a long fight against all the diverse forces I name in collective (and this generalization at real price) “Vasari”--is strangely parallel to this and yet contrary to it. This can, of course, be true, even if strange; but perhaps my message, or at least its hearing, loses strength in trying to retain this truth. (But I am certainly not, for this, willing to compromise the light.) “Another series of men who are usually neglected in studies of the Renaissance are those whom we might call "The Conservitors," they who fought the long fight in the dark: Cassiodorus, Benedict, St Columba, Alcuin. Both these and early printers, Aldus, Estienne Froben of Basel, Plantin, Elzevir of Leyden, The Kobergers, Caxton, who is more familiar, find fitting memorial in Putnam's "Books and their Makers during the Middle Ages."”

Here, something I must attach to my longtime plotting of a certain definition of good art as precisely that which makes one’s world wider, newer, more alive. On vi-viii: “Art is a joyous thing. Its happiness antedates even Whistler; apropos of which I would in all seriousness plead for a greater levity, a more befitting levity, in our study of the arts. / Good art never bores one. By that I mean that it is the business of the artist to prevent ennui; in the literary art, to relieve, refresh, revive the mind of the reader--at reasonable intervals--with some form of ecstasy, by some splendour of thought, some presentation of sheer beauty, some lightning turn of phrase--for laughter, especially the laughter of the mind, is no mean form of ecstasy. Good art begins with an escape from dulness.”

This reduces to a more compelling word the core of the spirit that is good in common between Sean Tatol and Diva Corp. “What we need is a literary scholarship, which will weigh Theocritus and Mr Yeats with one balance, and which will judge dull dead men as inexorably as dull writers of to-day, and will, with equity, give praise to beauty before referring to an almanack.”

“The study of literature is hero-worship.” I half-dreamed of this as I was going to bed last night or getting out of it this morning (I remember not which). I really believe this, and the implications for me are great, and still, of course, to be worked out. (The peril of apparent narcissism may be greater still.) This comes at the very beginning, just under the title Praefatio ad lectorem electum. “The history of an art is the history of masterwork, not of failures, or of mediocrity. The omniscient historian would display the masterpieces, their causes and their inter-relation. The study of literature is hero-worship. It is a refinement, or, if you will, a perversion of that primitive religion.”

“Art is a fluid moving above or over the minds of men”: I have near-quoted this in the last day or two already more than once; here’s the source. On v-vi: “There are a number of sciences connected with the study of literature. There is in literature itself the Art, which is not, and never will be, a science. / Art is a fluid moving above or over the minds of men. / Having violated one canon of modern prose by this metaphysical generality, I shall violate another. I shall make a florid and metaphorical comparison. / Art or an art is not unlike a river. It is perturbed at times by the quality of the river bed, but is in a way independent of that bed. The colour of the water depends upon the substance of the bed and banks immediate and preceding. Stationary objects are reflected, but the quality of motion is of the river. The scientist is concerned with all of these things, the artist with that which flows.”

I set this aside for now; but I eventually need to learn more of the history of “the Star of the Sea,” which I know only superficially (though I know this Name of Hers well, so well). “... which Catullus had in mind when he wrote the « Dianae sumus in fide / Puellae et pueri integri." But we are hardly fair in comparing " La Regine Avrillouse" to this Latin verse, which follows the

classic dance of worship. This quasi-Zarabondilla, or Tarantella, is the successor, one supposes, of the scandalous Cordax of the later Empire. At the time of "La Regina Avrillouse," the worshippers of Diana, and the Star of the Sea, are moving to the still graver music of ritual, safe in their cloisters."

If I should ever succeed in clawing employment out of this my chosen bakery, I must remember this, too, in addition to the fragment I set to words just after entering the park below the observatory a few weeks ago. "[From a razo, or prose preface:] "Bernart of Ventadorn (1148-95) was of Limousin, of the Castle of Ventadorn, and was one of low degree, son, to wit, of a serving-man who gathered brushwood for the heating of the oven wherein was baked the castle bread.""

I save the quotation on 37 of Jaufre Rudel, a song that has always been dear to me; but I'd forgotten how he coincided with my (and many others'--I'm surprised how often I hear this opinion of mine echoed) pleasure in cold, the delicate and exquisite beauty of this natureingang surpassing all the lovely others, and the amour de lonh vow at the end of this portion, which I may as well have taken for myself long since. ""Lan quand li iorn son lonc en mai / M' es bels douz chans d' auzels de lonh." "When the days are long in May / Fair to me are the songs of birds afar. / And when I am parted from her I remember me of a love afar, / And I go with a mind gloomy and so bowed down / That no song nor white thorn flower / Pleaseth me more than the winter's cold. / Never more will I take me joy of love / Unless it be of this love afar, / For a nobler and fairer I know not of / In any place either near or far.

Eliot's "Ezra Pound: His Metric and His Poetry"; I stash abundantly, but I think it's well to have nearly his whole spiel (apologia, even) here (actually, I've cut much; this is what is useful to retain for me, and it's much, but still I've done a good bit of work).

"Pound is not one of those poets who make no demand of the reader; and the casual reader of verse, disconcerted by the difference between Pound's poetry and that on which his taste has been trained, attributes his own difficulties to excessive scholarship on the part of the author. "This," he will say of some of the poems in Provençal form or on Provençal subjects, "is archaeology; it requires knowledge on the part of its reader, and true poetry does not require such knowledge." But to display knowledge is not the same thing as to expect it on the part of the reader; and of this sort of pedantry Pound is quite free. He is, it is true, one of the most learned of poets. In America he had taken up the study of Romance Languages with the intention of teaching. After work in Spain and Italy, after pursuing the Provençal verb from Milan to Freiburg, he deserted the thesis on Lope de Vega and the Ph.D. and the professorial chair, and elected to remain in Europe. Mr. Pound has spoken out his mind from time to time on the subject of scholarship in American universities, its deadness, its isolation from genuine appreciation, and the active creative life of literature. He has always been ready to battle against pedantry. As for his own learning, he has studied poetry carefully, and has made use of his study in his own verse. "Personae" and "Exultations" show his talent for turning his studies to account. He was supersaturated in Provençe; he had tramped over most of the country; and the life of the courts where the Troubadours thronged was part of his own life to him. Yet, though "Personae" and "Exultations" do exact something from the reader, they do not require a knowledge of Provençal or of Spanish or Italian. Very few people know the Arthurian legends well, or even Malory (if they did they might realize that the Idylls of the King are hardly more important than a parody, or

a "Chaucer retold for Children"); but no one accuses Tennyson of needing footnotes, or of superciliousness toward the uninstructed. The difference is merely in what people are prepared for; most readers could no more relate the myth of Atys correctly than they could give a biography of Bertrand de Born. It is hardly too much to say that there is no poem in these volumes of Mr. Pound which needs fuller explanation than he gives himself. What the poems do require is a trained ear, or at least the willingness to be trained."

"... --least of all Walt Whitman. Probably there are only two: Yeats and Browning. Yeats in "La Fraisne," in "Personae," for instance, in the attitude and somewhat in the vocabulary: / I wrapped my tears in an ellum leaf / And left them under a stone, / And now men call me mad because I have thrown / All folly from me, putting it aside / To leave the old barren ways of men … / For Browning, Mr. Pound has always professed strong admiration (see "Mesmerism" in "Personae"); there are traces of him in "Cino" and "Famam Librosque Cano," in the same volume. But it is more profitable to comment upon the variety of metres and the original use of language."

"Ezra Pound has been fathered with vers libre in English, with all its vices and virtues. The term is a loose one--any verse is called "free" by people whose ears are not accustomed to it--in the second place, Pound's use of this medium has shown the temperance of the artist, and his belief in it as a vehicle is not that of the fanatic. He has said himself that when one has the proper material for a sonnet, one should use the sonnet form; but that it happens very rarely to any poet to find himself in possession of just the block of stuff which can perfectly be modelled into the sonnet."

"And from this we turn to a very different form in the "Altaforte," which is perhaps the best sestina that has been written in English: 'Damn it all! all this our South stinks peace. / You whoreson dog, Papiols, come! let's to music! / I have no life save when the swords clash. / But ah! when I see the standards gold, vair, purple, opposing, / And the broad fields beneath them turn crimson, / Then howl I my heart nigh mad with rejoicing. // In hot summer have I great rejoicing / When the tempests kill the earth's foul peace, / And the lightnings from black heaven flash crimson, / And the fierce thunders roar me their music / And the winds shriek through the clouds mad, opposing, / And through all the riven skies God's swords clash.' I have quoted two verses to show the intricacy of the pattern. / The Provençal canzon, like the Elizabethan lyric, was written for music. Mr. Pound has more recently insisted, in a series of articles on the work of Arnold Dolmetsch, in the "Egoist," on the importance of a study of music for the poet. / Such a relation between poetry and music is very different from what is called the "music" of Shelley or Swinburne, a music often nearer to rhetoric (or the art of the orator) than to the instrument. For poetry to approach the condition of music (Pound quotes approvingly the dictum of Pater) it is not necessary that poetry should be destitute of meaning. Instead of slightly veiled and resonant abstractions, like 'Time with a gift of tears, / Grief with a glass that ran--' of Swinburne, or the mossiness of Mallarmé, Pound's verse is always definite and concrete, because he has always a definite emotion behind it." At the end there, that maddening problematic of what might still be called the Romantic inheritance.

"There are, here and there, deliberate archaisms or oddities (e.g., 'herward'); there are deliberately arbitrary images, having their place in the total effect of the poem: 'Red leaf that art blown upward and out and over / The green sheaf of the world …' 'The lotos that pours / Her fragrance into the purple cup …' 'Black lightning …' (in a more recent poem)
but no word is ever chosen merely for the tinkle; each has always its part in producing an

impression which is produced always through language. Words are perhaps the hardest of all material of art: for they must be used to express both visual beauty and beauty of sound, as well as communicating a grammatical statement. It would be interesting to compare Pound's use of images with Mallarmé's; I think it will be found that the former's, by the contrast, will appear always sharp in outline, even if arbitrary and not photographic. Such images as those quoted above are as precise in their way as 'Sur le Noel, morte saison, / Lorsque les loups vivent de vent …' and the rest of that memorable Testament."

"[Quoting Pound in an article on Dolmetsch:] 'Any work of art is a compound of freedom and order. It is perfectly obvious that art hangs between chaos on the one side and mechanics on the other. A pedantic insistence upon detail tends to drive out "major form." A firm hold on major form makes for a freedom of detail. In painting men intent on minutiae gradually lost the sense of form and form-combination. An attempt to restore this sense is branded as "revolution." It is revolution in the philological sense of the term.... / Art is a departure from fixed positions; felicitous departure from a norm....'"

I value this, actually, for the list produced as a stereotyping, " the poets of Dante's day, their roses and their flames, their gold and their falcons, and their literary amorousness, [in or and] the library": "... and Mr. J. C. Squire (now the literary editor of the New Statesman), in an appreciative review in the New Age, had counselled the poet that he would 'gain and not lose if he could forget all about the poets of Dante's day, their roses and their flames, their gold and their falcons, and their literary amorousness, and walk out of the library into the fresh air.'"

"Many readers are apt to confuse the maturing of personality with desiccation of the emotions. There is no desiccation in "Ripostes." This should be evident to anyone who reads carefully such a poem as "A Girl." We quote it entire without comment. 'The tree has entered my hands, / The sap has ascended my arms, / The tree has grown in my breast-- / Downward, / The branches grow out of me, like arms. // Tree you are, / Moss you are, / You are violets with wind above them. / A child--so high--you are, / And all this is folly to the world.'"

Collecting Pound's scattered beauties, whether, as here one of each, glittering luminous details or amour courtois perfectly shown--is always a valuable but vain effort, for they glitter brightest in their hard-boiled sparsity (I dislike my own phrase): "[From "Dance Figure":] 'Thine arms are as a young sapling under the bark; / Thy face as a river with lights. / White as an almond are thy shoulders; / As new almonds stripped from the husk.' Or the ending of "Near Périgord" : 'Bewildering spring, and by the Auvezère / Poppies and day's-eyes in the green émail / Rose over us; and we knew all that stream, / And our two horses had traced out the valleys; / Knew the low flooded lands squared out with poplars, / In the young days when the deep sky befriended. / And great wings beat above us in the twilight, / And the great wheels in heaven / Bore us together ... surging ... and apart … / Believing we should meet with lips and hands … / There shut up in his castle, Tairiran's, / She who had nor ears nor tongue save in her hands, / Gone, ah, gone--untouched, unreachable! She who could never live save through one person, / She who could never speak save to one person, / And all the rest of her a shifting change, / A broken bundle of mirrors...!'"

Pound's Cathay.

I loved this poem.

"The River-Merchant's Wife: a Letter.
While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead

I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.
You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,
You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.
And we went on living in the village of Chokan:
Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.
// At fourteen I married My Lord you.
I never laughed, being bashful.
Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.
Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.
// At fifteen I stopped scowling,
I desired my dust to be mingled with yours
Forever and forever, and forever.
Why should I climb the look out?
// At sixteen you departed,
You went into far Ku-to-Yen, by the river of swirling eddies,
And you have been gone five months.
The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.
You dragged your feet when you went out.
By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,
Too deep to clear them away!
The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.
The paired butterflies are already yellow with August
Over the grass in the West garden,
They hurt me,
I grow older,
If you are coming down through the narrows of the river Kiang,
Please let me know beforehand,
And I will come out to meet you,
/// As far as Cho-fu-Sa.
By Rihaku."

Pound's Personæ and Canzoni--these I confuse.

I just offer detail-pickings, all I can muster for the moment; but these are indeed gathered strange, among the best (most ghost-potent) there; is that whole file to become but a chaosmic heap? I hope not, but I'm helpless for that now.

Here he repeats what I've said about other painters, but have said again and again, it seems, about Modigliani:

All of Pound's Canto XVII, overwhelming me as even more of what my favorite (III) is to me, in the underground between Pound's "Titchfield Street" (actually just off it; if he can use "The Poet of Titchfield Street" as a pseudonym, then I would be "The Painter of Hollywood Blvd.") residence and the Barbican, on a whim.

Pound's A Quinzaine for This Yule.

Again, I can only paste cut fragments, just now.

This on the plane in Dublin going to London, but mostly on the first part of the bus ride across Ireland East to West: therefore, in west Co. Dublin and into Co. Galway, before Kinvarra; i.e., to the tune of:

and

Beckett's Proust.

"Proust's creatures, then, are victims of this predominating condition and circumstance--Time ; victims as lower organisms, conscious only of two dimensions and suddenly confronted with the mystery of height, are victims: victims and prisoners. There is no escape from the hours and the days. Neither from to-morrow nor from yesterday. There is no escape from yesterday because yesterday has deformed us, or been deformed by us. The mood is of no importance. Deformation has taken place" (2). This is wonderful, and justification to the particular (and oft-stereotyped) "affect" that pervades his work.

He continues from the same point, and brings it into contact with the matter of destruktion of identity (with whose replacement, at my hands, in my account, with "prismatic personality" or "prismatic personhood" or whatever else, I am still uncomfortable, and perhaps always will be even if I always reaffirm it). (So he joins Michelangelo, see whose poem above, as pillar.) "Yesterday is not a milestone that has been passed, but a daystone on the beaten track of the years, and irremediably part of us, within us, heavy and dangerous. We are not merely more weary because of yesterday, we are other, no longer what we were - before the calamity of yesterday. A calamitous day, but calamitous not necessarily in content. The good or evil disposition of the object has neither reality nor significance. The immediate joys and sorrows of the body and the intelligence are so many superfoetations. Such as it was, it has been assimilated to the only world that has reality and significance, the world of our own latent consciousness, and its cosmography has suffered a dislocation. So that we are rather in the position of Tantalus, with this difference, that we allow ourselves to be tantalised. And possibly the perpetuum mobile of our disillusions is subject to more variety. The aspirations of yesterday were valid for yesterday's ego, not for to-day's" (3).

I marked this with "prism" because of the "multicoloured" at the end; it puts the motion inherent in my prism to perhaps better music, with a figure which may be from always-relevant alchemy or from something more primordial (the vessel-carrier of Rilke's Erwachsene, perhaps, or the milk- and honey-vessels from Flaminius, above, even). "The individual is the seat of a

constant process of decantation, decantation from the vessel containing the fluid of future time, sluggish, pale and monochrome, to the vessel containing the fluid of past time, agitated and multicoloured by the phenomena of its hours" (4 - 5).

This is useful to retain as a distillation of his brilliant and cutting and even hard-to-chew (like the hremata in John) portrayal of habit. "The laws of memory are subject to the more general laws of habit. Habit is a compromise effected between the individual and his environment, or between the individual and his own organic eccentricities, the guarantee of a dull inviolability, the lightning-conductor of his existence. Habit is the ballast that chains the dog to his vomit. Breathing is habit. Life is habit. Or rather life is a succession of habits, since the individual is a succession of individuals … The periods of transition that separate consecutive adaptations (because by no expedient of macabre transubstantiation can the grave-sheets serve as swaddling-clothes) represent the perilous zones in the life of the individual, dangerous, precarious, painful, mysterious and fertile, when for a moment the boredom of living is replaced by the suffering of being. … 'If Habit,' writes Proust, 'is a second nature, it keeps us in ignorance of the first, and is free of its cruelties and its enchantments.' Our first nature, therefore, corresponding, as we shall see later, to a deeper instinct than the mere animal instinct of self-preservation, is laid bare during these periods of abandonment. And its cruelties and enchantments are the cruelties and enchantments of reality. 'Enchantments of reality' has the air of a paradox. But when the object is perceived as particular and unique and not merely the member of a family, when it appears independent of any general notion and detached from the sanity of a cause, isolated and inexplicable in the light of ignorance, then and then only may it be a source of enchantment. … The narrator arrives at Balbec-Plage, a holiday resort in Normandy, for the first time, accompanied by his grandmother. They are staying at the Grand Hotel. He enters his room, feverish and exhausted after his journey. But sleep, in this inferno of unfamiliar objects, is out of the question. All his faculties are on the alert, on the defensive, vigilant and taut, and as painfully incapable of relaxation as the tortured body of La Balue in his cage, where he could neither stand upright nor sit down. There is no room for his body in this vast and hideous apartment, because his attention has peopled it with gigantic furniture, a storm of sound and an agony of colour" (7 - 12).

Here an exquisite wonder of Huysmanian prose: "Considered as a progression, this endless series of renovations leaves us as indifferent as the heterogeneity of any one of its terms, and the inconsequence of any given me disturbs us as little as the comedy of substitution. Indeed, we take as little cognisance of one as of the other, unless, vaguely, after the event, or clearly, when, as in the case of Proust, two birds in the bush are of infinitely greater value than one in the hand, and because--if I may add this nox vomica to an apéritif of metaphors--the heart of the cauliflower or the ideal core of the onion would represent a more appropriate tribute to the labours of poetical excavation than the crown of bay I draw the conclusion of this matter from Proust's treasury of nutshell phrases : 'If there were no such thing as Habit, Life would of necessity appear delicious to all those whom Death would threaten at every moment, that is to say, to all Mankind.'" (16-17).

I hardly need to say how this insight arrives to me, me with my exquisitely bad memory, making Bella and everyone wonder whether I'm even alive, me with my eyes with no life behind them, me in my constant dismay at my lack of presence of mind except in those handful of flashes per day (and only on perfectly-arranged days without incident in the morning). "Proust had a bad memory—as he had an inefficient habit, because he had an inefficient habit. The man

with a good memory does not remember anything because he does not forget anything. … Strictly speaking, we can only remember what has been registered by our extreme inattention and stored in that ultimate and inaccessible dungeon of our being to which Habit does not possess the key, and does not need to, because it contains none of the hideous and useful paraphernalia of war. But here, in that 'gouffre interdit à nos sondes,' is stored the essence of ourselves, the best of our many selves and their concretions that simplists call the world, the best because accumulated slyly and painfully and patiently under the nose of our vulgarity, the fine essence of a smothered divinity whose whispered 'disfazione' is drowned in the healthy bawling of an all-embracing appetite, the pearl that may give the lie to our carapace of paste and pewter. May--when we escape into the spacious annexe of mental alienation, in sleep or the rare dispensation of waking madness. From this deep source Proust hoisted his world" (17 - 19).

This follows tightly upon the above, but I separate it because of the way it scaffolds my ubiquitous "crystalline" figures (and the alchemy ones, the scent ones, and the tincture ones besides) with pyla that reach deeper into the soul-gouffre than I, it need barely be said, know how to go. "The mood, as usual, has no importance. The point of departure of the Proustian exposition is not the crystalline agglomeration but its kernel--the crystallised. The most trivial experience--he says in effect--is encrusted with elements that logically are not related to it and have consequently been rejected by our intelligence : it is imprisoned in a vase filled with a certain perfume and a certain colour and raised to a certain temperature. These vases are suspended along the height of our years, and, not being accessible to our intelligent memory, are in a sense immune, the purity of their climatic content is guaranteed by forgetfulness, each one is kept at its distance, at its date. So that when the imprisoned microcosm is besieged in the manner described, we are flooded by a new air and a new perfume (new precisely because already experienced), and we breathe the true air of Paradise, of the only Paradise that is not the dream of a madman, the Paradise that has been lost" (55).

This follows immediately upon the above. "The identification of immediate with past experience, the recurrence of past action or reaction in the present, amounts to a participation between the ideal and the real, imagination and direct apprehension, symbol and substance. Such participation frees the essential reality that is denied to the contemplative as to the active life. What is common to present and past is more essential than either taken separately. Reality, whether approached imaginatively or empirically, remains a surface, hermetic. Imagination, applied--a priori--to what is absent, is exercised in vacuo and cannot tolerate the limits of the real. Nor is any direct and purely experimental contact possible between subject and object, because they are automatically separated by the subject's consciousness of perception, and the object loses its purity and becomes a mere intellectual pretext or motive. But, thanks to this reduplication, the experience is at once imaginative and empirical, at once an evocation and a direct perception, real without being merely actual, ideal without being merely abstract, the ideal real, the essential, the extratemporal. But if this mystical experience communicates an extratemporal essence, it follows that the communicant is for the moment an extratemporal being. Consequently the Proustian solution consists, in so far as it has been examined, in the negation of Time and Death, the negation of Death because the negation of Time. Death is dead because Time is dead." (55-56). By the end we have a soteriology in (what is technically) paraphrase ("by other means," or "by another way" as the magi returned, to restore my optimistic Christian trappings, if you like, here). [I add on 30 May 2025: I don't know how this tracing checks out with the relevant section (near the end) of Being and Time, but what Beckett is really

extracting here is an ekstasis within the music of time itself, that music which is not captured in the conventional experience of time that we (as subjects) have built up; and that ekstasis is all the "saving" that we were promised, maybe, and somehow it is enough, and paradise is present precisely as a scansion of the world, within every stitch in its fabric, we're just always skipping right over it, but then what is it like to pop through into it, is it only a slipping glimpse? I don't think so.]

I do not really understand the workings of his account of aesthetics, plotted, anyway, with the same jalons that are the most indispensable to me, but it is here. "So now in the exaltation of his brief eternity, having emerged from the darkness of time and habit and passion and intelligence, he understands the necessity of art. For in the brightness of art alone can be deciphered the baffled ecstasy that he had known before the inscrutable superficies of a cloud, a triangle, a spire, a flower, a pebble, when the mystery, the essence, the Idea, imprisoned in matter, had solicited the bounty of a subject passing by within the shell of his impurity, and tendered, like Dante his song to the 'ingegni storti e loschi,' at least an incorruptible beauty : 'Ponete mente almen com'io son bella.' And he understands the meaning of Baudelaire's definition of reality as ' the adequate union of subject and object, and more clearly than ever the grotesque fallacy of a realistic art—' that miserable statement of line and surface,' and the penny-a-line vulgarity of a literature of notations. … But Proust is too much of an affectivist to be satisfied by the intellectual symbolism of a Baudelaire, abstract and discursive. The Baudelarian unity is a unity 'post rem,' a unity abstracted from plurality. His 'correspondence' is determined by a concept, therefore strictly limited and exhausted by its own definition. Proust does not deal in concepts, he pursues the Idea, the concrete. He admires the frescoes of the Paduan Arena because their symbolism is handled as a reality, special, literal and concrete, and is not merely the pictorial transmission of a notion. For Proust the object may be a living symbol, but a symbol of itself. The symbolism of Baudelaire has become the autosymbolism of Proust. Proust's point of departure might be situated in Symbolism, or on its outskirts. / But he does not proceed pari passu with France, towards an elegant scepticism and the marmorean modes, nor, as we have seen, with Daudet and the Goncourts to the 'notes d'après nature,' nor, of course, with the Parnassians to the ineffable gutter-snippets of François Coppée. He solicits no facts, and he chisels no Cellinesque pommels. He reacts, but in a different direction. He recedes from the Symbolists--back towards Hugo. And for that reason he is a solitary and independent figure. The only contemporary in whom I can discern something of the same retrogressive tendency is Joris Karl Huysmans. But he loathed it in himself and repressed it. He speaks bitterly of the 'ineluctable gangrene of Romanticism,' and yet his des Esseintes is a fabulous creature, an Alfred Lord Baudelaire. / We are frequently reminded of this romantic strain in Proust. He is romantic in his substitution of affectivity for intelligence, in his opposition of the particular affective evidential state to all the subtleties of rational cross-reference, in his rejection of the Concept in favour of the Idea, in his scepticism before causality. Thus his purely logical--as opposed to his intuitive--explanations of a certain effect invariably bristle with alternatives. He is a Romantic in his anxiety to accomplish his mission, to be a good and faithful servant" (57 - 61).

Further indispensable observations pertaining to my "prism" figure, without which, in every account, it does not succeed in differentiating itself as it must, as, that is, the all-consequential all-rewriting rethought of selfhood that it entails. "The only reality is provided by the hieroglyphics traced by inspired perception (identification of subject and object). The conclusions of the intelligence are merely of arbitrary value, potentially valid." An impression is

for the writer what an experiment is for the scientist--with this difference, that in the case of the scientist the action of the intelligence precedes the event and in the case of the writer follows it. Consequently for the artist, the only possible hierarchy in the world of objective phenomena is represented by a table of their respective coefficients of penetration, that is to say, in terms of the subject. (Another sneer at the realists.) The artist has acquired his text: the artisan translates it."

I preserve this, I think, not merely for the fascinating vegetable-tending analytic of the subject when the will is abstracted away (in alchemical terms, the prismatic self that is the residue when the will is burned away from the lump that was the subject), but, even more, for the fascinating use of Giorgione, that is, of Painting, and of Venice, at Beckett's hands; such that I still will always need Venice even on the days when Pound is inaccrochable and with him (for quite other reasons) the often-bad painters there (I mean Titian & co., mainly, also, probably, Tiepolo, but not, as far as I have figured it, Giorgione and Bellini; they alone, it may be, are faultless): "And, like members of the vegetable world, they seem to solicit a pure subject, so that they may pass from a state of blind will to a state of representation. Proust is that pure subject. He is almost exempt from the impurity of will. He deplores his lack of will until he understands that will, being utilitarian, a servant of intelligence and habit, is not a condition of the artistic experience. When the subject is exempt from will the object is exempt from causality (Time and Space taken together). And this human vegetation is purified in the transcendental aperception that can capture the Model, the Idea, the Thing in itself. / So that there is no collapse of the will in Proust, as there is for example in Spenser and Keats and Giorgione. He sits up all night in Paris, with a branch of apple-blossom laid beside his lamp, staring at the foam of the white corollae until the dawn comes to redden them. But this is not the terrible panic-stricken stasis of Keats, crouched in a mossy thicket, annulled, like a bee, in sweetness, 'drowsed with the fume of poppies' and watching 'the last oozings, hours by hours'; nor yet the remote, still, almost breathless passion of a Giorgione youth, the spirit shattered in corruption, damp and rotting, so finely suggested by d'Annunzio in his description of the Concerto ('ma se io penso alle sue mani nascoste, le immagino nell'atto di frangere le foglie del lauro per profumarsene le dita') and so grossly misinterpreted by the same writer when he sees in the rapt doomed figure of the Tempesta a vulgar Leander resting between orgasms; nor yet the horrible pomegranates of 'Il Fuoco,' bursting and bleeding, dripping the red ooze of their seed, putrid on the putrid water. The Proustian stasis is contemplative, a pure act of understanding, will-less, the 'amabilis insania' and the 'hölder Wahnsinn.'" (69-70).

Last, I shelve the music analytic that just about ends his essay, with an eye toward seizing upon its momentum to utter a final word (at least mine) on what Pound (and Mallarmé, and countless others) tend so often to say about music's status as the highest attainment possible in the other arts. "A book could be written on the significance of music in the work of Proust, in particular of the music of Vinteuil: the Sonata and the Septuor. The influence of Schopenhauer on this aspect of the Proustian demonstration is unquestionable. Schopenhauer rejects the Leibnitzian view of music as 'occult arithmetic,' and in his aesthetics separates it from the other arts, which can only produce the Idea with its concomitant phenomena, whereas music is the Idea itself, unaware of the world of phenomena, existing ideally outside the universe, apprehended not in Space but in Time only, and consequently untouched by the teleological hypothesis. This essential quality of music is distorted by the listener who, being an impure subject, insists on giving a figure to that which is ideal and invisible, on incarnating the Idea in what he conceives to be an appropriate paradigm" (70-71).

This on the flight to Dublin and in the lobby of our hotel there, i.e., to the tune of:

and

and

and

I've been to London and returned awash in Pound.

It's strange, but it may be that this Pound is the one which shines the brightest, the one from whom I'll spin the most of what he is to be for me. His farewell to that city ("Mauberley") is the first appearance of "usura," and the paranoid antisemitic theories don't start afflicting him until after, and he and they don't release each other until sometime on, when Pasolini visits.

Now there is every picture of a painting or of a detail of a painting from my trip. They betray something of a misbehavior of mine in these museums, but I insist this is the fastest way* of noting contours, forms, relations, positions, etc.--I just don't have the luxury of the pen

(notebooks and sketchbooks), not when I am traveling like this. But now I have to complete the pointer, actually leave the recording, which is a work of days (Hesiod consoles).
[* and therefore the best, as long as it really does amount to the indication-pointer that is the only necessary mark left by the operation of the gathered strange--which it does, always and only when my eyes are truly, self-destroyingly, depletingly open, the membranous protective lenses of my corneae** creaked away like the lid of a chest so that the flaming grindstone of the Painting can tear away at my soft retinae and all the nerve-laced red tissue behind.]

[** Read: the numbing habit-conventions of ordinary (non-painting) looking, Beckett's calculus applied to the optic nerve.]

This document is already overladen. Imagine that the underlinked is inserted seamlessly here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ysMMwbfJe8d0-i4m9LMdV_2eYF1SrIpWMYHQkA1mXvs/edit?usp=sharing

27 February 2025

At 4 a.m., again, I cannot sleep. My heartbeat is palpable and, clear to see, too alive to let this body back into dreams.

Nervous, maybe, about the play and all that it entails. I know I'm making so much out of nothing, but I really am fixated folding over all of the ins and outs of the thought of this as the incipit of any "image" of myself that may--and will, in any case, eventually, if I succeed in anything--exist outside my own self.

I wrote (I think this was 24 February 2025):

"God is: Giganto, a giant circus elephant. (To GGG?)
I am: Some random echo. (To Eliza and, perhaps, to the rest of the world.)
I am: The anti-modern religious American, an archetype.
I am: A pawn of the savage sea, A plaything of the deep
I desire in vain: Placid harbor, for two boats side by side."

And also, instant sealing whatever image of me will be retained, a kiss between characters, a first of its kind for me and for Georgia and for Phoebe. Meaningless on the most obvious personal level, but actually quite important for me, because of how that of which it is the point-image is something in which I believe in so deeply as to identify myself (really, more to the point here, my image) with it, and to avow this identification: I the "anti-modern religious American" (as the play's announcement has it), I the "romantic idealist" (as something Georgia wrote for casting has it*), the sincere insistent upon sincerity through and in the obvious and deliberate comedy of it (all this most acute in my "bob and rot").

[* It has come to my attention that Georgia, John, Joseph, and Jasmine did not, it seems, audition anyone else for my role. An obvious joke on me that I know exactly how to take as an affirmation that I can work with, can work from. It can, in any case, never have been otherwise

for me, me with my walk that Harry clocked before ever dew was fallen.]

By all of which I mean: If anyone whom I intend to know me as a painter knows me first in this, then, if they know me for how I see this (a conditional itself betraying the same idealism), then they will know me well already.

I have so many trobata from London and Dublin that--take this for early-morning-drunken, but--I think there might be enough.

I won't know this, though, until I've done a couple things.

First, I need to add to the same trobata-heap what might be called (by Tatol, perhaps it was reifying deliberately coarsely, perhaps it was about Omari Douglin) "contemporary painting moves": things I've seen (hangings of paintings, materials, indeed compositions in their own way; Baer's little fixtures in the corner, anything I can cull from the handful of long wadings through Contemporary Art Library from a month or two ago and also from a handful of months before that, Caguiat's heat-sensor giving me a certain license, e.g., for such ideas as those below in this same note).

Second, I think it may be that before I can let trobata find their way to individual paintings, I first need to arrange them, arrange them into moments, which moments I am not sure, but the image I have is that the list of moments will begin with or include "the Sicilian school" and "amour de lonh" and "occasionals (candied oranges, New Years cards)" and (I don't know) perhaps "sublimation" (of desire into art, as a problematic, an open question; à la Belle noiseuse etc. (Modigliani, Pound's Sellaio, so forth)--just trying to have something to say as important as what Rohmer put into his diamantic-compressed choice of answer to a certain question, "chasteté absolue")--arrange at least some pivotal subset of them (a subset not including, say, the "contemporary art moves" just alluded to), a subspace definitively spanned by a certain axis, the axis of the history of Love that I sketched (imperfectly) on that one afternoon nearly a year ago when I finally for the first time had everything (that's not quite right--but images had never poured out of me in quite that way before).

What I pointed to above ("ideas"): A vision, in my sleepless 4-to-5 lying-in-dark-with-beating-heart, of a few things.

Door handles (like the ones in my apartment--the very same, if I can, as the bathroom door) affixed to the outward-facing edges of panels of my paintings, one at top and one at bottom of both the left and right sides, the top ones' handles pointing up, the bottom ones' pointing down. And maybe a different kind of knob (like that of the apartment's own front door, or else like the knobs on the cabinets) on the same sides, either at center or somewhere above or somewhere below.

Such things to, of course, interact as on a new plane of balance-striking with any number of the tensions tensed in the panel.

Such a composite-panel to sit well in the same room, or playing the same role in a different room, as the paintings I will make on the windows that I found once I learn how to make oil paint stick to it. I hope the panel remains translucent; it must, probably, be freestanding, away from a wall.

And another to sit well with these (all these loose manoeuvers having, as I say, the same status as any other trobatum): To use the sublimation printing process, with its endearing circumstance of temporarily rendering the home noxious, a process about which I just learned, for the first time, from Phoebe. If, as she says, polyester (content at least 50%) is the only surface on which it is possible, here is an idea of how it can be done and how it can be balanced (rendered into the unity). The model is the "incomplete" folio (30v) of the Book of Kells. Perhaps something can be done to the synthetic cloth to make it resemble the vellum. Then, I believe it will require three layers (black yellow red), I will print it and seal it (the sealing having that charged-finalizing-moment role that monotype held over painting's head, that moment that, for Hantaï, was the mounting of the canvas after any number (decided on the fly) of foldings-paintings). And now here is the thing: This is one of a linked pair. I don't know whether this synthetic cloth can or ought to be mounted to a stretcher; maybe it can be an aluminum one, maybe mounted backwards, like Merlin James (how's that for a trobatum? All the way back to Chisom-curated Matthew Brown), so that the ink is "inside" a canvas and this canvas is turned and exposed (maybe it's balanced by, elsewhere, a figure painted as both turned and exposed; this seems like a scenario with a good sexual charge to it, but I can't quite see how to instantiate it in a way that would be evidently correspondent to this Kells page). In any case, the other of the linked pair (turned-exposed correspondent aside), will be a work on vellum if there's any way for me to obtain that; if there's not, I can make a surface with the rabbit skin glue I have (as did Hantaï, among his medieval trappings that Warnock noted as telltale of the premodern (I think this was her word; in any case, by contrast to "antimodern," it maintains a valence of possibility, like a dreamspace unactualized) mist pervading the pivot-point year of 58-59), which I must have listed as "... on rabbit skin" rather than "on rabbit-skin-glue-primed panel." The point, the climax: I have to put these surfaces in skin-contact. I have to have the vellum meet the polyester. Maybe they hang side by side, maybe face to face, I don't know; or maybe the vellum/skin is just a wrapper I can wrap around the back of the backwards-mounted polyester--I don't know.

Another stray note in that floating shouldn't-be-awake-space: Love is always to be the great theme. (As in Ulysses, it ought often not be fore to mind, often overwashed by the sheer turbulence of the everything (the entire life of the entire mind of an entire day in the entire world, all that infinite variety and all those gradations of ambiguity and likelihood and banality and possibility and contingency and beauty!); but it ought never to be questionable what is my final word, what I'd be meaning if I said (as Joyce does, and reading him there's no doubt) "the word.") Love is always to be the great theme: It may even be that, contrary to what I just said, trobata from paintings with titles like "allegory of true love" do account for a majority of the floating detail that makes its aggregate way onto my surfaces. Love is always to be the great theme: And I think one among many simultaneous ways this will be guaranteed is in the above-delineated arranging-schema of trobata into exhibitions or movements, each registering an interval of the music of the Jupiter-sized spheres, the music, that is, in other words, of what might be called "the history of Love," only called this so that my work may find a way to lay claim to Pound's aim for the Cantos: to write "a poem containing history" (this his definition of "epic").

Yet another stray note in that floating shouldn't-be-awake-space: On Pound, if I ever said anything, I'd need to say first, "A bafflingly shameless antisemite during the 1930s, Pound aired, at this time, radio broadcasts filled mostly with incomprehensible aesthetic pontifications and dotted with not a small dose of praise for Mussolini, whose economic policies had somehow

seemed a heaven-sent answer to Pound's eccentric (to say the least) theories of finance. Among other nauseating lines of thought down which it sends a reader in irreversible awe of the sheer quality of even a single one of this poet's works, one can't help but imagine weighing two incomparables against each other: practical immediate social consequence on the one hand, if, in this case, there is any to be spoken of; and, on the other, the indelible mark left on the world by any work of art of true beauty. There can, of course, be no taking of this measure. But it casts into dizzying relief the insane hope upon which all art, any life lived in utter devotion to beauty, is staked."

But, if I ever did say anything thus prefaced, I think I could align into a single thread everything I've ever noted about him, quote everything (with the same abandon with which he quoted at such length in Spirit of Romance), make it once-and-for-all clear.

A thought that if I made writings such as this (an essay on a subject), or indeed such as my oscillatory "literary" work, maybe they can have a role in an exhibition something like the role of Georgia's play. They'd of course be less fun, but maybe something more like Georgia's play can accompany them, etc.; maybe there can be a published book containing the essays as well as a script of some kind, a script that can be staged at the opening--but this is too much like Georgia--all that I really intend to imitate from her is the enlivening and participating aspect of bringing so many people together (just to produce! And them brought together in the best way, talking with a pretext) and then bringing even more in (the participating aspect of each "performance"), and then the fact of having something (some singular initial focus) to refract everything around (all the paintings) through (as long as the singular initial focus does not become the sole lasting impression; but then, this may have been the case with Hantaï's years 56-58; I guess that's fine as long as one eventually burns it away, leaving only purified Painting against all odds after all this Contemporary paraphernalia (market accoutrement) (I by no means include Chrysalis in this, Calla and Max and Diva Corp are each wrong, the play is fun and not just fun but also good and also all the things I say about it here & above)), second.

My love, my amour de lonh, in personam, my amour de lonh in presentia actuale: A monogamy the likes of which this world has never seen. Or not in centuries.

28 February 2025

These days--for a week--I wake up almost every night at 3 or 4 a.m. and my heart beats so strong that I am powerless but to stay awake, lying there, hearing it. But, in the day, I have the most peculiar feeling. My heart is beating then (now, at 9:44 a.m.), too, at a volume and pace which is even distracting, but which I can only describe in this one way, at which I shiver but of which I mean every word:

For years, maybe three or four of them, I have felt a certain lostness, a certain loss I mean, a

loss of a version of myself, a version with a difference I could describe in a few ways, including by invoking an angelic goodness, or the power of the Spirit, but each of these puts in play more than is necessary. Really, celui qui me manque is just an energy. I use this word, I repeat, in a very specific sense--I repeat--"When once I said that caffeine is the motor-force in and behind all things, really what I was elevating and universalizing was not caffeine but whatever remains as the in-common distillate when you overlay love, and caffeine, and desire, and lust, and then remove from the picture everything in love, and in caffeine, and in desire, and in lust, that is not in common with all of the others. The center of the Venn rose of these four." (I scaffold that naming with a thought derived from an exhibition by Molly Rose Lieberman ("like, '20 regards on coffee from Molly Rose Lieberman' and try to gather every reference in a title or in a work that I can find, and If it comes out to more than 20 I can have 20 categories, and if it comes out to less than 20 I can split some into multiple regards"), and now I scaffold it again with the word I noted a year and a month ago: "hyle,"* and now I scaffold it again with an image recently re-found in Pound--"Art is a fluid moving above or over the minds of men."**

[* I made something more specific, and better, out of this sometime between then and now; for now, as a stand-in pointer, I just reproduce these images of two separate etymological entries, and note that somehow there was a transmutation of "wood" (both in the sense of the material and in that of "in a wood") into (in some way) glass, glas, alike unto Dante's crystalline rose that is the Empyrean and everything thereunto corresponding.]

[** In the time between re-finding and finally noting this phrase in quotation here, I tried to remember it, and it came out "dazzling beauty, art of the highest order (the only order), liquid magic in that river above and around our heads in which we as entire unimaginable masses so rarely immerse them."]

On the necessity of treatment in my work of themes pertaining to the relation of aristocracy to beauty (all under the heading of "l'allure"): Many can well overlook them entirely, the vast majority of artists today can with great justification completely set all that aside. But I, being a Catholic painter, do not have that privilege; they'll be raised eventually, whether I initiate their treatment or not. That is why I must exhume that sea-burial, dredge that body and all its incrustation of sunken seagreen- and coral-rusted gold and perfect pearl, wring from it every drop of beauty around which I can fit my teeth and vacuum-form my lips and tongue, then cast

aside the empty husk that remains (which husk I, incidentally, named Fascism), drop it overboard empty and with heavier weights than were ever possible before.

The way I see it being no cause for worry that all my paintings look too different: I can at any point pick one that's good, make 20 versions of it (regards sur l'enfant), choose the best-looking six of them and show them. That's how I see it in dirty terms. I could of course describe it much more intricately and truly.

Piece together with the below what I wrote in the middle of the night (night before last, pasted at bottom of this note), and maybe I've written related things before, too, and maybe also fill in bits of the story such as I told it to Maddie last night. And I may describe my character as: An Amish simpleton with touchingly romantic plans for a future with his beloved, who is busy struggling out of the community's traditional ways, her escape hatch of choice being standup comedy.

In its own way it's about performance and attention, which are topics I haven't thought about much before but being tricked into a play has made me find them fun to play with.

All under the title "Hallucinations; Or, A Portrait of the Artist as an Ageing Boy"

If asked why the playbill says I'm a painter I shall say: "In my dreams. No, I make paintings, but I've never shown them."

If asked why I didn't mention it I shall say: "Because I would, actually, like to learn about paintings in galleries and how that works, but that it is much more important to me

If asked why it is much more important to me to make friends: "Because now all I have is walks to play their role. I live in my home, in a terrifying sense."

If asked why I would like to learn about paintings in galleries: "Not because I want to be a part of any particular image I or anyone might have of an art world, not because I want to "be an artist," but because I want to be the perfect painter, the perfect artist who alone (alone among the possible versions of me) can redeem my life. And it has become clear that I cannot do this unless I sell my paintings, because there is no other way I can have enough time."

If asked why I believe in medium and tradition ("La Peinture," "painter" rather than "artist," "devotion to one of the arts"), I shall say "Not because I believe that they are desirable but because I believe that they are inevitable, that those who set out to proceed in their permanent absence immediately recuperate them by other (and not preferable) means."

If I meet someone who, Phoebe says, "does readings and stuff": I shall ask whether she thinks it is embarrassing to read something I'm kind of writing kind of about the play, or not if it's funny; that is, on condition that it be determined to be funny, which determination I can leave to her after I've written it. I can "à clef" it, of course. The voice is not exactly in character, but close; still the anti-modern religious American, but the religion is art and the other difference is excruciating self-consciousness of all that being the butt of the joke entails.

Trying to explain why I am quote-unquote “like this,” i.e., able to play this particular role with no noticeable adjustment to my own natural character, I admitted to being Catholic, schooled at a monastery run by monks who fled Stalin’s policy of enforced atheism in Hungary, as my only guess as to why I am a little odd or detached, monkish, say. If I am asked to elaborate on my being Catholic: I can explain it like this: A monk can still be one of my best friends, even if he is suspicious of the fact that I live with my girlfriend, because he is open-minded enough to leave me to my own devices. This is, basically, my contribution to the “anti-modern religious American archetype.”

To John I will raise the subject of myself cast as a gift: I will tell him that I heard a rumor that no one else was auditioned for my part; I will tell him that I cannot tell whether his calling me, maybe two days before, to fill in for that actor at a shoot with him and his friend the photographer was a favor done to me or a favor done to him—that I cannot tell whether he really needed someone and really thought I was the best for the job, or whether out of sheer kindness he let me see what he knew I’d enjoy, the set of a shoot for a fashion magazine (name it, Marfa?), (at the new Hollywood theater). In other words, I cannot tell whether my casting was another pure gift alike to that of the chance to be a model like him for an hour or two, or whether it was a gesture of thanks for my immediately preceding favor.

In either case, of course, I’m a nepotism hire. But then, is Joseph, his boyfriend, who not only did the casting but also delivered the play’s last lines (?)? Joseph, of course, is really funny, in an actual way, not like mine. So is it still nepotism if you’re the best for the job? And that’s how it’s always been, isn’t it: The best poets are the aristocrats, because they are the ones with the time to craft themselves into beautiful selves glinting with light, and the first light, back before dew was fallen, before ever dew was shed.

That’s Pound, by the way, an interesting case because he was born to a poor farmer (?) in Idaho in (year?) but through enormous power of will made himself into a writer of the most beautiful lines since Cavalcanti. and, incidentally, he did everything in his nauseating power to resurrect a particular vision of aristocracy.

… [Some how get toward saying the below, either early in the above or more likely toward its end:]

[27 February 2025:]

At 4 a.m., again, I cannot sleep. My heartbeat is palpable and, clear to see, too alive to let this body back into dreams.

Nervous, maybe, about the play and all that it entails. I know I’m making so much out of nothing, but I really am fixated folding over all of the ins and outs of the thought of this as the incipit of any “image” of myself that may--and will, in any case, eventually, if I succeed in anything--exist outside my own self.

I wrote (I think this was 24 February 2025):

“God is: Giganto, a giant circus elephant. (To GGG?)
I am: Some random echo. (To Eliza and, perhaps, to the rest of the world.)
I am: The anti-modern religious American, an archetype.
I am: A pawn of the savage sea, A plaything of the deep
I desire in vain: Placid harbor, for two boats side by side.”

And also, instant sealing whatever image of me will be retained, a kiss between characters, a first of its kind for me and for Georgia and for Phoebe. Meaningless on the most obvious personal level, but actually quite important for me, because of how that of which it is the point-

image is something in which I believe in so deeply as to identify myself (really, more to the point here, my image) with it, and to avow this identification: I the “anti-modern religious American” (as the play’s announcement has it), I the “romantic idealist” (as something Georgia wrote for casting has it*), the sincere insistent upon sincerity through and in the obvious and deliberate comedy of it (all this most acute in my “bob and rot”).

[* It has come to my attention that Georgia, John, Joseph, and Jasmine did not, it seems, audition anyone else for my role. An obvious joke on me that I know exactly how to take as an affirmation that I can work with, can work from. It can, in any case, never have been otherwise for me, me with my walk that Harry clocked before ever dew was fallen.]

By all of which I mean: If anyone whom I intend to know me as a painter knows me first in this, then, if they know me for how I see this (a conditional itself betraying the same idealism), then they will know me well already.

[28 February 2025:]

These days--for a week--I wake up almost every night at 3 or 4 a.m. and my heart beats so strong that I am powerless but to stay awake, lying there, hearing it. But, in the day, I have the most peculiar feeling. My heart is beating then (now, at 9:44 a.m.), too, at a volume and pace which is even distracting, but which I can only describe in this one way, at which I shiver but of which I mean every word:

For years, maybe three or four of them, I have felt a certain lostness, a certain loss I mean, a loss of a version of myself, a version with a difference I could describe in a few ways, including by invoking an angelic goodness, or the power of the Spirit, but each of these puts in play more than is necessary. Really, celui qui me manque is just an energy. I use this word, I repeat, in a very specific sense--I repeat--“When once I said that caffeine is the motor-force in and behind all things, really what I was elevating and universalizing was not caffeine but whatever remains as the in-common distillate when you overlay love, and caffeine, and desire, and lust, and then remove from the picture everything in love, and in caffeine, and in desire, and in lust, that is not in common with all of the others. The center of the Venn rose of these four.”

Or, “My Chrysalis.”

[4 March 2025: These can never be read or sent! Excruciation of embarrassment!]

9 February 2025

Bella asked me if I feel like Tom Ripley, she being Cate Blanchett, Joseph Geagan is Gwyneth

Paltrow, and so forth. Indeed: saying “yes” and then figuring out how.

I met Joseph, and Georgia Gardner Gray and another lady named Jasmine, yesterday in the back office of Regen Projects. My head was spinning from the thought of the centrality of the axis plotted out by the names attached to Regen--Tillmans, Barney, Graham, Pettibon, Kapoor, Prince, Ligon, Auerbach, Trecartin,--as though someone had their fingers up to a very tall column of blocks very low on a Jenga tower. (Gardner Gray herself owns a list that causes just as much vertigo: Sadie Coles, Croy Nielsen, Francis Irv, Capitain Petzel, Clearing, Lomex, the Whitney and Reena Spaulings, on top of Regen.) I had to cross my legs a certain way and focus on breathing very slowly to mitigate the little uncontrollable tremors I was getting while reading over my lines, the same ones I get anytime I’m remotely nervous, which even the most notional anticipation of “performance” can induce.

Notional here, because John had texted me shortly before this “casting call” started, I’d responded when it was a third of the way through, I told him I’m too shy when it comes to any kind of performance, I showed up anyway, I read the scripts, I quickly realized which character I need only read, John stepped out to call someone else back, I reached awkwardly to shake his hand while he initiated a hug, we hugged, he told me to just read the lines for the character that had already made it make perfect sense why he’d texted me: An Amish simpleton, romantic and Romantic.

I was reading calmly at first, they were laughing politely and not necessarily on purpose when I did certain things with my voice, I kept being able to control my voice well even when my leg started bouncing about two-thirds through. They told me to stay until the end to try me alongside a candidate for the character I’d be alongside, if chosen. They seemed to retain at least two candidates for her role, and only one (me) for mine, even though she, Sydney, was immeasurably more capable and committed than me.

I stand to make five hundred dollars and at least three or four friends.

10 February 2025

If they cast me it is surely for this reason, that I hope to be able to avow: That I attend my religious service with unimpeachable regularity; and that I work with my hands [a truth so nominal as to be for all purposes a lie]. (And if asked: I paint; and, while the painting does not buy my bread, I bake [this lie I had hoped, and felt completely certain, would be true by the time it needed to be; it is not].)

13 February 2025

Maeterlinck and Crommelynck (the Elder): Forevision of this (GGG’s) play becoming a talismanic drame for me, a few characters channeling forces larger than their own beings and in their somewhat-inscrutable Acts accomplishing something on Prospero’s register (indeed this is

how I always find myself speaking after a movie*), in the precise way I imagine these Belgians having been--which is to say, all the indelible-change accomplished-magic Yeats felt in Ubu Roi (which is thus an incantatory utterance in its own way) but perhaps (I imagine Maeterlinck and Crommelynck this way) using no means (character types, settings, textures) that Mallarmé would not have used himself.

[* For example, on Herzog's Nosferatu: "with about fifteen minutes to go, Herzog the writer departs from an at times shotwise faith to the original, and he and his trio [Adjani, Ganz, and Kinski] forge their own immortal symbol-acts in the final scenes" and on The Pianist: "Alongside the saints, if not usually among them, there are actors (who depend on directors and) whose performance transfigures human being" (this is a different kind of transformation which is never far when the other one, that I had been speaking of, is at hand; as alchemists know, the momentum of conversion easily leaps from one material to another) and on Murnau's Nosferatu: "in the final intertitle, it graduates (for me) from excellent horror film to formidable artwork: '… and the truth bore witness to the miracle: at that very moment, the Great Death came to an end, and the shadow of the deathbird was gone ... as if obliterated by the triumphant rays of the living sun'" and on Last Tango in Paris (particularly in how it elicits the language of sacrament, i.e. "the telltale sign (the visible reality)" and what that implies (the convergence at the heart of beauty, love, art, sex, religion, in a word, Adoration)): "... constant and consummated breakdown at the peaks of sex and violence. The telltale sign (the visible reality) of this breakdown is always in some way the shutting out of (i.e., death to) the world, at its most poetic in this film in the scene where the dancers' world is hermetically cut off from Brando and Schneider's, untouchable by (or untouchable from within) Brando and Schneider's. Its solution, then, of course, is always going to have to be Love. Brando and Schneider were never to become, ultimately, capable."]

About the actual Maeterlinck I learn something that absolutely confirms him as a representative for this kind of drama: He wanted no violent emotion or particular bodily animation from his actors, only actions and lines; for this reason he wrote plays for marionettes for a time and, even after this, continued to call his actors "marionettes." They are vessels, charged and active; their verbal and ritual activity on stage is the whole substance of their performance. This principle is deep behind his notion of "static drama," where all the exceptional and bustling events so definitive of the received notion of tragedy are cleared out of the way, and the core of the action (the transformative incantation) still remains in the still silence. [I add on 14 February 2024 a pair of sentences, remarkably aligned to this, written by Éric Rohmer in his "Le Cinéma, art de l'espace," his very first text as a critic, says de Baecque / Herpe: "Murnau was not only able to avoid any concession to the anecdotal, but also to dehumanize subjects that appear to be the richest in human emotion. […] All the elements that might have drawn our attention to something other than this immediate registering of the transcendence within the sign are eliminated."]

And about the actual Fernand Crommelynck I learn that he wrote artful farces which reveal in glorious light the monumental conclusion that lies sleeping in the heart of any of certain qualities which, even if apparently minor or easily overlookable, nonetheless amount, even in their miniature quotidian instantiations, to a lapse of volitional control, to an exposure of the thrownness that is our truth (our "at-the-hands-of" state of being).

21 February 2025

I cannot sleep here [in London]. I've only slept well one night [since the start of the trip, a week prior], and it was before last. I enjoyed no more than four drinks and slept for the same number of hours. I woke for the last time before 5, to the sound of insistent morning birds and the deep rumble of the underground, intermittent crazed laughter too. (Deep rumble: Really, infrabroad movement only audible with ear to pillow.) I remembered Kenner about Pound, "genius enjoys long days," still not knowing whether this "enjoys" is just "receives" or is rather "knows how to take pleasure in." So, thinking of the author of my beloved Quinzaine for This Yule and A Lume Spento, I stepped into the blue predawn to stand and look at the many addresses where he lodged.

24 February 2025

On some mornings it takes colossal force to hold onto my injunction not to trust any perceptions or appraisals of life, my life, until I have extracted and sipped my coffee. The suppression of thought entailed, the imposition of blankmindedness, feels often like a flaying and a crushing. How can I live, I haven't the energy associated without exception with anyone who aspires to do something which I have determined is the only possible justification of my ongoing existence. You have picked a hard job, said Fraser Brough.
…
In this my newest pre-dawn, after this ten-hour sleep that I thought would finally restore a mental presence I have been cut off from for two weeks (the two weeks I haven't slept), the only thing in which I can join my voice in Pound's is "And I am not a demigod, I cannot make it cohere." This newest pre-dawn, when Pound's own recorded voice kept its presence in some corner of my dented mind ("Light, and the first light / Back before dew was fallen / Before ever dew was shed" … "Water glazes the upturned nipple, / As Poggio has remarked"), my dented body with its spine still sore, the discomfort of a three-minute piss at three a.m. and another at six, the fire-alarm headache that migrates straight down into the stomach and becomes noise-nausea, "everything is wrong" I said unable to pony up the colossal force necessary to hold onto my injunction.

27 February 2025

At 4 a.m., again, I cannot sleep. My heartbeat is palpable and, clear to see, too alive to let this

body back into dreams.

Nervous, maybe, about the play and all that it entails. I know I'm making so much out of nothing, but I really am fixated folding over all of the ins and outs of the thought of this as the incipit of any "image" of myself that may--and will, in any case, eventually, if I succeed in anything--exist outside my own self.

I wrote (I think this was 24 February 2025):

God is: Giganto, a giant circus elephant. (To GGG?)
I am: Some random echo. (To Eliza and, perhaps, to the rest of the world.)
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I am: A pawn of the savage sea, A plaything of the deep
I desire in vain: Placid harbor, for two boats side by side.

And also, instant sealing whatever image of me will be retained, a kiss between characters, a first of its kind for me and for Georgia and for Phoebe. Meaningless (just a gesture) on the most obvious personal level, but actually quite important for me, because of how that of which it is the point-image is something in which I believe in so deeply as to identify myself (really, more to the point here, my image) with it, and to avow this identification: I the "anti-modern religious American" (as the play's announcement has it), I the "romantic idealist" (as something Georgia wrote for casting has it*), the sincere insistent upon sincerity through and in the obvious and deliberate comedy of it (all this most acute in my "bob and rot").

[* It has come to my attention that Georgia, John, Joseph, and Jasmine did not, it seems, audition anyone else for my role. An obvious joke on me that I know exactly how to take as an affirmation that I can work with, can work from. It can, in any case, never have been otherwise for me, me with my walk that Harry clocked before ever dew was fallen.]

By all of which I mean: If anyone whom I ardently desire to know me as a painter knows me first in this, then, if they know me for how I see this (a conditional itself betraying the same idealism), then they will know me well already.

[The following pertains tangentially to what I am gathering in this file, but pertains with greater heft to a fifty-thousand-word bodying-forth that fills mostly the files "25_02" and "London dublin trobata"; therefore read it only as an emblem of what else has been flooding through me of late.]

My love, my amour de lonh, in personam, my amour de lonh in presentia actuale: A monogamy the likes of which this world has never seen. Or not in centuries. (How nice.)

28 February 2025

These days--for a week--I wake up almost every night at 3 or 4 a.m. and my heart beats so strong that I am powerless but to stay awake, lying there, hearing it. But, in the day, I have the most peculiar feeling. My heart is beating then (now, at 9:44 a.m.), too, at a volume and pace which is even distracting, but which I can only describe in this one way, at which I shiver but of which I mean every word:

For years, maybe three or four of them, I have felt a certain lostness, a certain loss I mean, a loss of a version of myself, a loss which now feels undone, myself redeemed, a feeling years-unfamiliar. The now-covered-over (for just a moment made as though never there--and it may return without warning or explanation but in any case it is right now as though the farthest thing from my world) difference I could describe in a few ways, including by invoking an angelic goodness, or the power of the Spirit, but each of these puts in play more than is necessary. Really, celui qui me manque is just an energy. I use this word, I repeat, in a very specific sense--I repeat--"When once I said that caffeine is the motor-force in and behind all things, really what I was elevating and universalizing was not caffeine but whatever remains as the in-common distillate when you overlay love, and caffeine, and desire, and lust (the German word, not the English cognate, the German not necessarily carrying the English note of perversion), and then remove from the picture everything in love, and in caffeine, and in desire, and in lust, that is not in common with all of the others. The center of the Venn rose of these four."

[I know that certain things above come off with an ungainliness, a particularly embarrassing betrayal of fixation and/or delusion; maybe this next part smooths them over and shows what I do understand (at least whatever small set of things I do understand), and thus makes one or two of my outbursts forgivable, having staged them in a sufficiently self-conscious heading as "Hallucinations." Or: All in the spirit of overindulging in the entire spirit of performance and attention, which are topics I haven't thought about much before but being tricked into a play has made me find them fun to play with.]

If asked why the playbill says I'm a painter I shall say: "In my dreams. No, I make paintings, but I've never shown them."

If asked by John why I never mentioned it I shall say: "Because I would, actually, like to learn about paintings in galleries and how that works, but that it is much more important to me to have friends, so, if there was ever a hint of a chance that one wish could expense the other (i.e. the slightest chance that my desire for friends be misinterpreted as careerist), I'd unhesitatingly choose the friends by sacrificing any possibility of "advancement"--i.e., by keeping my painting a secret.

If asked why it is much more important to me to make friends: "Because now all I have is walks to play their role. I live in my home, in a terrifying sense. Singular room resembling, I imagine, never having seen one, a cabin in a cruise ship."

If asked why I would like to learn about paintings in galleries: "Not because I want to be a part of any particular image I or anyone might have of an art world, not because I want to "be an

artist," but because I want to be the perfect painter, the perfect artist who alone (alone among the possible versions of me) can redeem my life. And it has become clear that I cannot do this unless I sell my paintings, because there is no other way I can have enough time."

If asked why I believe in medium and tradition ("La Peinture," "painter" or "fabbro" or "craftsman" rather than "artist," "devotion to one of the arts"), I shall say "Not because I believe that the concepts "medium" and "tradition" are desirable but because I believe that they are inevitable, that those who set out to proceed in their permanent absence immediately recuperate them by other (and not preferable) means."

If I meet someone who, Phoebe says, "does readings and stuff": I shall ask whether she thinks it is embarrassing to read something I'm kind of writing kind of about the play, or not if it's funny; that is, on condition that it be determined to be funny, which determination I can leave to her after I've written it. I can "à clef" it, of course. The voice is not exactly in character, but close; still the anti-modern religious American, but the religion is art and the other difference is excruciating self-consciousness of all that being the butt of the joke entails.

I may describe my character as: An Amish simpleton with touchingly romantic plans for a future with his beloved, who, for her part, is busy struggling out of the community's traditional ways, her escape hatch of choice being standup comedy.

Trying to explain why I am quote-unquote "like this," i.e., able to play this particular role with no noticeable adjustment to my own natural character, I admitted to being Catholic, schooled at a monastery run by monks who fled Stalinist torture-enforced atheism in Hungary, as my only guess as to why I am a little odd or detached, monkish, say. If I am asked to elaborate on my being Catholic: I can explain it like this: A monk can still be one of my best friends, even if he is suspicious of the fact that I live with my girlfriend, because he is open-minded enough to leave me to my own devices. This is, basically, my contribution to the "anti-modern religious American archetype."

To John I will raise the subject of my casting, whose gift-status I'm struggling to rationalize: I will tell him that I heard a rumor that no one else was called to read for my part; I will tell him that I cannot tell whether his calling me, maybe two days before, to fill in for that actor at a shoot with him and his photographer friend was a favor done to me or a favor done to him—that I cannot tell whether he really needed someone and really thought I was the best for the job, or whether out of sheer kindness he let me see what he knew I'd enjoy, the set of a shoot for a fashion magazine at the New Theater Hollywood. In other words, I cannot tell whether my casting was another pure gift alike to that of the chance to be a model like him for an hour or two, or whether it was a gesture of thanks for my immediately preceding favor, if such that was. In either case, of course, I'm a nepotism hire. But then, is Joseph, his boyfriend, who not only did the casting but also delivered the play's last lines? Joseph, of course, is really funny, in an actual way, not like mine. So is it still nepotism if you're the best for the job? And that's how it's always been, isn't it: The best poets are the aristocrats, because they are the ones with the time to craft themselves into beautiful selves glinting with light, and the first light, back before dew was fallen, before ever dew was shed. (Pound, by the way, is an interesting case because he was born to a federal registrar in Idaho in 1885 but through enormous power of will made himself into a writer of the most beautiful lines since Cavalcanti. And, incidentally, he did everything in his nauseating power to resurrect a particular vision of aristocracy, one which is, it need hardly be said, fundamentally at odds with Baudelaire's, the one that is in question when I use the term.

2 March 2025

This bleeding directly from the above:

On that sleep & not a drop of caffeine I'm on my second walk of the day and this one up the mountain.

Intense admiration, also unrelenting desire to make known my gratitude and sense of luck, to Phoebe talented, and also to Georgia unimaginably generous.

My feeling--the blood-pumping sleeplessness that I can no more stop talking about than I can shake the bodily symptom itself--is pinpointable thanks to a very brief phase of interest among my friends (in which I, quite out of character, partook)--macerated Ritalin--even prescription amphetamines are called, concerningly, "speed," I believe, when under abuse (means of ingestion, recreational intent). Only to know what this pharmakon was at bottom, since I'm surrounded by it whether with or without awareness; I would have done the same, for the same reason, with Prozac, for example. But this new nervousness, as compared to the chemical one years ago, has been twice as intense throughout, and has lasted five times longer already. Attention in greater quantity than ever, and reliable yet from time to time self-exceeding heapings of praise (from Georgia, from Phoebe, from unnumbered strangers suspected of outsize power to change my life). I believe it would be for the best if by the end of all this each (both attention and praise, I mean, which do turn out to be separable and each delectable on its own specific terms) had been thereupon voided of its potency. But such would be counter to the waveform workings of the neurotransmitters whose role in all this is all too palpable, if never knowable in detail, let alone open to successful manipulation.

I am, recall, at the mercy of such tricks as those of which Sally and Phoebe know the ins and outs, tried for the first time: Sally's yogic breathing, Phoebe's vacuation of the short-term memory (which I disobeyed, thinking the purpose it addressed specific to her, but found myself wrong, found myself in the instants before entering the stage for the most important time unable to find my lines anywhere, though, of course, when I stepped out and moved through everything as had been instilled with training, they were all right where I had left them, each following comfortably on the last; but on this technique of the vacuation of one's lines from the short-term memory: I aided it with my own little supporting technique-inventions, "share a secret, it doesn't have to be true" to Sally (she demurred, but my tactic's success must have been secured already in whatever it brought to her mind); "favorite childhood memory," to Phoebe (getting her dog); "favorite flower" (Phoebe to me, to which I answered "lilacs, on grounds of books I love, not to actually buy, I wouldn't even really know them in a crowd"; she said she also made this distinction between favorite flowers on different planes of preference, not even knowing the name of the flowers she buys routinely). All this detail stored in the acuteness of a memory I cannot imagine being brought about by means other than these carefully-choreographed enactments of attentional diversion surrounded by the wall-wave of that nervousness as it crested. It is, then, another of countless gleaming diamond-intricacies of performance as-such, such as I'd never considered it before, the countless glimpse-gifts, I mean, that I owe to Georgia (and to John, to Joseph, to Phoebe, and to the other treasures at these rehearsals and

performances whom I'd never expected to meet). I remember, and write, with the acute self-consciousness of the scarcity and likely going-and-never-returning of all these specific intricacies. But then I always think like that. I always have the more or less explicit awareness that my chance to do so may one day and without notice evaporate, for short, for long, or for permanent, for any of an infinite range of reasons that range from the most to the least drastic, sudden death to unwitting distraction.

Acuteness of this sleeplessness, in its effects on attention, memory, and glossolalia, my strange speech in these notes, in direct proportion to the rigor of my usual monkish rhythm.

2 March 2025

Unutterable pain—it is over!

I walk loops and loops around the empty night neighborhood because, sleepy and empty though I was there at dinner the last, there couldn't be sleep for me on returning from Shaun's house, so aroused was my mind to committing everything to memory.

That now I have no choice but to go back to what I used to do (back to my own life, that is), after seventeen days' vacation; that now I cannot stomach that, because never has what I used to do been so unflatteringly compared. I can't stomach it. It is, I say it now, impossible.

Things to hang onto:

Most importantly, to begin to really paint.

And, tapering the dropoff of my firehose of novelty: The fact that the pictures from Danielle will come soon, and that John seemed sincere in his saying that they came out really good; the fact that soon too will come (I hope, or I guess) video of the play; most of all, the hope that in Broken Bow, rummaging through sticks shooting at rodents, I'll finally wash away and get beyond this stomach state, this sleeplessness, this ascetic vanishing of appetite (being empty like an angel and at least in that way pure), which still persists—the "end" only replaces the feeling with an afterburn, an afterimage the subject of which is still perfectly recognizable.

More to hang onto ("reminisce, relive," I said to John with a smile that hopefully ambiguated its truth, when he asked what is next for me after my little spotlight), just ghosts, barely even survivals of the play but still potent enough in retaining its aura to my own heart:

Alain Delon movies, about which, I've learned, I'd be able to talk with Phoebe and Zack (Zach? Zac?) if I ever talk to them again (what is worst, fearful emblem of everything with everyone there, is that there was a sign interpretable as a sign that the four of us will not be friends, as, in saying goodbye, it was "see you on the 29th," as though, not before). To try to get lost in the angelic quality underneath and within Delon's every performance, in unity and then in tension with his capacity for sin, that might really be what holds me fixed to his face. A quality that

invites the descriptor “angelic beauty,” a quality thus alike to one in Marcantonio Flaminio and one in Hardy Hill: I treasure nothing more than praise (such is my vileness if I choose to point to it, if I choose to have one to point to) and I treasure no praise so much as any which fits that same picture—and I could not fail to remember forever that John used the very same word, “angelic,” freely and without hint of whatever Anna Margrét Jónsdóttir (Icelandic friend of the first night in Dublin) wrapped in the phrase “angel complex.”

Feel like Amish ball in a corner.

Feel, inevitably walking again, at night alone and unaccountably fearful as I always am, that familiar feeling of ill portent: feel fragile, feel that harm is not just likely but almost certain to come to me.

The fact is that the minds in that room held a knowledge, collectively or perhaps even individually (perhaps even more than once over individually), that could instantaneously change my life. The fact is that there is some best thing for me to do, has been for a year (three) and I have not known it. The fact is that the minds in that room held this knowledge and I did not know how to trace it and to draw it out. And—what may be even worse—I do not know, cannot now know, whether I have succeeded in the parallel and immeasurably greater intention of mine within that room (that beautiful, beautiful room, inhabited by its owner with the same idiosyncratic frankness that made her call “David” (Zwirner)’s Melrose Hill real estate decision “retarded”): to make friends (without them I will die in those clouds on the mountain above my room).

In silence that my disjointed mind could not fill with its own words, I’ve been autistically repeating (But I didn’t have to call that repetition autistic. John, for example, described repeatedly watching Dune, lately and on an ongoing basis, and the fixation there didn’t seem morbid in the way I might aimlessly fret over mine to be) music by one whom I at least might call angelic when he holds his guitar, one an aspect of whom—I cannot really say which—Harry said was in common with me, when last he was here, October. In “who’s been pulling the strings up and down your back” there is the very same charge that my paintings need, that they lack, of which they can never have too much; there is that very same charge in that image, and even more so when it’s taken with “I’m in another body who’s in somebody else” and “and I’m not evil I just got this (this what?)”

“Go now let me sing of a time when”: I just liked the music of that; I don’t think Homeric invocations of the muses are translated just like that anywhere, but I was made to think of it when I thought to myself, What is the common thread that really unites so many of the things I feel impelled to say, including things “about” nostalgia and sentimentality and fixation but also proximally the thought of attaching to a certain photo of me the words “Back before Bella cut my hair. Before ever dew was fallen” (or “back before blood was shed”?) (I like the Delilah image, and the latter draws it out more, but maybe the former is more delicately beautiful) (I also, independent of this image, like the idea of “Samson-angel.” Independent of this image because I cannot lay claim to the obvious pretension (pretender), the delusion (Kinbote of me).) I think it was (remembering more now) “I’m not evil I just got this (these) design (desire / desires)” (he breathes them so gently as to preserve an ambiguity between these words)?

Can I say of myself “and I’m not evil but I got this desire” now as ever, now more than ever, now as ever, now more than ever, in particular, I can dare this step, in the company of two other lines or facts, “each time you leave a little part of me dies” and that “Alesis” cannot really fail to resurface a fundamental fracture, a slivering, a covered-over breakage (not a break in me but,

worse, a break of me)—according to a certain analytic, that is, an analytic that, it happens, I've chosen to die on the hill of retaining ("a monogamy the likes of which …," etc.), an analytic that feels right now newly difficult.

3 March 2025

Painting is like a lover in that you have to want to do something to it. With it, too, of course, never not with it (or else a crime not less than murder), but can't be only with it and not also to it, because then there is no sex.
The "figure" (as in formalism, but also as in figura, figure) of a lover--whether una Donna or una domna, whether the body of Beatrice or "And there were not 'those girls', there was one face"--that figure is the only one in which there is really room for everything.
Painting is like sex also in that you will never know it unless you leave it completely.
Room for everything: So that it is in a line like "every time you leave a little part of me dies," particularly set in time as it is*, that I feel every ending, of a night, of a kind of friendship that can come and go, of a kind that can't (crying hot tears as Danny walked away, visible for long, cinematically, then, I guess, set in time, on all that invented grass behind my last dorm).
[* Recourse to which durational setting painting has not, but has much else, including things that could go by Nancy's name "scansion."]
Paris over Brussels, Anthony says—the French are more forgiving of your French than are the Belgians.
Anthony did know Tala, but not Nathaniel, from the Rijksakademie.
At the Gaylord because of the concrete floor there could be an Easter vigil—no light on the paintings whatsoever besides handheld candles and photo flashes; maybe even certain are curtained, tabernacular, like in Cérémonies commémoratives, maybe veiling the most intimate or most riskful nudities, being very careful not to overstep what I, a Catholic not blaspheming, can say about the unity central to art, love, beauty, sex, religion. (My Catholicism is as much about how every one of the greatest artists were Catholic as it is about the monks; and not only were they Catholic but they were also and almost in the same way gay—Michelangelo, da Vinci, Dante. (On counting Dante: Consider certain facts about Beatrice and you will see exactly what I mean here by gay; I mean it in a generalized sense that may even include myself.))
I've already forgotten the details but while studying liberal arts at Columbia John posed for a Regen photographer (Jack Pierson) and I forget how but that might be the beginning of his Shaun-linked annals.

4 March 2025

When I said how I haven't been able to sleep, and that more specifically I wake up with heart pounding at 4 a.m. and no hope of restoring it, John said, "Magnesium," and he said one or two other things, but then he said "Magnesium--cherry juice has a ton, but then you have the sugar right before bed …" Nala's electrolytes (she gives me her overstock) turn out to have plenty, so last night (among countless other techniques, including 6-hour walk in the morning, no caffeine, eating only salad after breakfast), following his advice, I slept continuously for ten hours, 9 p. to 7 a. And I'm now engaged in trying to force the return of my appetite.

30 March 2025

I felt so alone in the last pew, or maybe even more specifically, abandoned, though I hadn't been, really. It was just the specific form my overwhelming emotion-wave, which is always washing over me in some form or other, took today.

I attended mass today at St. Ambrose at Fairfax and Highland. I would have gone to mass anyway, but I drove across Hollywood because Greydon told me this is the church that where he brings his dog and sits in the back, and that he'd be here this morning. He was not, and I was hopeful that he would be, but only followed through on my intention stated to him because of my remembered desire--remembered from last night, that is, as distinct from recuperated this morning.

I looked at this big room, not an unusual church for the 1970s, big pink walls and those ceiling tiles reminding me of a school or a convention center, big squared walls and ceilings reminding me of the church of the Holy Family in Deming, New Mexico, then reminding me of the sanctuary of our sorrowful mother known as the Grotto in Portland, then, in the extreme, of San Isidro del General in Costa Rica. In the textures of these walls and ceiling I felt the same crushing banality, the same why here, why like this, that I felt when I held Nana's cold hand and saw everything in her room through my panicked tears, delayed some hours and finally washing over me as they could have been expected to but in a particular way that could never have been expected.

I read the names of Mary in the stained glass, the ones I could see: Domus aurea, Rosa mystica, Sedes sapientiae, Regina martyrum, Regina prophetarum, Foederis arca, Regina coelis. This prayer, to read her names, is for me that better than which there is no other.

I was overjoyed to be told by John, when he happened to walk into the coffee shop that Phoebe and I had walked to with Greydon (invited by me) and were joined by Sally (invited by her), to come to his apartment for Valerie Keane's closing this afternoon. Joseph told me the same as we were all standing up at the end of dinner at Musso's. When I drink I eventually slip consistently into a sensibility that insistently derives its favorite humor from vigorously presenting things exactly as they are. Joseph swings meanwhile into a more suave loud-voicedness, and for the second or third time I felt that we were talking past each other, even in those few instants.

A moment later, I was telling Georgia, prompted by her telling me for, I think, the fourth time, but at least the second time in two days, how happy it made her to see me and Phoebe

striking such a natural connection on the stage, that I was so sad to hear Phoebe tell me and Bella "see you on the 29th" in leaving Shaun's house, but that I believed that, now, we will see her and Zac, because her film club meets a quick walk from my apartment tonight and we've made it clear that we want to come and they've said they will tell us the address. But one never knows. And either before or after our final performance of our little act, but in either case during the last performance of the play, so during the last performance of one or the other of the other two little acts, Phoebe was smiling widely when she said she hoped they'd see more of me and Bella, and I did everything I could to make it as concisely unambiguous as possible that she couldn't be hoping it more than I was.

Greydon
Baudelaire
Seats
Jake
Veronica
Goodbye to Georgia
Tattoos
Piercing
Liz
Lily

Sally Ye Rustic

And these words: "Who's been pulling the strings up and down your back," "Just shut your mouth I only really want you," "turning over the whole apartment looking for something else, Did you find it, did you find it? Leave it to me to get the door," "Everything you wanted in your life is yours, come on, take what you want, baby take what you want," "I dream of nothing like I used to before." And of course in it all "Every time you leave a little part of me dies."

I listen to these songs again and again, overwhelmed with pleasure and the fear that they are imperceptibly but constantly emptying themselves of potency to save my mind from its hermetical paralysis in these things. In the fear-gripped wondering what reason there could possibly be to send a text reading "I'll send you the address tomorrow" when the same text could have contained the address itself, for example.

And now the idea of saying in an imagined future the words "I was cooking," the image (Poundian in its personae-ghost-donning) of the painter cooking and "cooking," a kitchen in the back of a place like Musso & Frank's, and he spindling ghouls in ochre oranges and greens out of deep umber.

And I continue, again as a month ago, to exacerbate the physiologico-behavioral impulse which has been emerging from without, from within, I know not exactly how even if I know why: What it is is hard to describe, but a great degree of precision can be achieved by incidental commonality: It is all those behaviors which depress the function of the immune system, sink the eyes deeper into the barely-perceptibly-emptied skull, distend the nerves and dwindle the words available to the tongue, as at Shaun's house: little sleep, substantial drink, and, most of all, restless and maximal physical exertion. Those walks, these things I do at the bottom of the tower, rising at 9 for that mass after drinking until 3.

2 March 2025

This bleeding directly from the above:

On that sleep & not a drop of caffeine I'm on my second walk of the day and this one up the mountain

Intense admiration, also unrelenting desire to make known my gratitude and sense of luck, to Phoebe talented, and also to Georgia unimaginably generous

Maybe I can ask "Gaylord studios" for help finding one or more persons to sit for me to paint my recuperations of such an "allegory of love" as Bronzino's, with what may be called with tongue in cheek its "unique iconography"; this as sounding board against which to cast the chasteté absolue which is the reason my newest painting, of Bella, will never again see light, as I knew from the minute it appeared to me it wouldn't after one first and final look (which, by the way, was even more painful that it could have been expected to be, the horrible piece of wood in my hands, having to carry it over to the bed where Bella lay and, what was immeasurably harder, like touching same-charged magnets, expose it to her view, and nothing that came of the viewing redeemed this suffering, in fact it was only exacerbated).

I had thought I could pursue the same with my then-yet-uncast actmate (I repeat because it must be made clear: I had this idea about no person in particular, I had it about the abstract possibility of a person--I ideated this about a formalism), thus drawing out and elaborating upon the interesting dynamic of erotic-substitution as triangulation-spatialization of unique real love (and all interference, moiré, that is born of the contact of this dynamic with the fact of the prismatic-unitary personhood of each "actor" filling each role). Obviously it's so latent here as to be missed entirely; a kiss in name only; but there was a time when my mind squirmed and quivered in the unknowing of how even just that would be (one of those things that, really, you can't know prospectively). Anyway the reason I think of requesting the mediation-assistance of the "Gaylord studios" is because, obviously, it need barely be said, I can't carry it forward with the real person that its abstraction turned into, nor likely could have with any real person it could have been; it turns out that I want too badly to be friends, with Phoebe and everyone, too badly to risk such a loose-gun question.

In the woods outside Broken Bow I will hopefully be photographed in the act of hitting a bullseye from the position of hanging by the knees from a limb. The gun (it can be mine, that shoots BBs) may be handed to me after I assume my pose. It won't be hard. The signifier is important to me on Godard's terms ("a girl and a gun") and on John's (having promised him, after Oscars-prompted talk about Queer and Burroughs (a figure dear to us both), "no William Tell" on this trip).

My feeling--the blood-pumping sleeplessness that I can no more stop talking about* [* To the eventually-unbearable annoyance of Bella; on the evening of 3 March 2025 she finally told me I was being a brat, had been being a brat for long, and thus ended our company-keeping on our last night together for a week, a parting of a kind that is still and probably will be forever a gut-deep-gauntlet for us] than I can shake the bodily symptom itself--is pinpointable thanks to a very brief phase of interest among my friends (in which I, quite out of character, partook)--macerated Ritalin--even prescription amphetamines are called, concerningly, "speed," I believe, when under abuse (means of ingestion, recreational intent). But this nervousness, as compared to the chemical one years ago, has been twice as intense throughout, and has lasted five times longer already. Attention in greater quantity than ever, and reliable yet from time to time self-exceeding heapings of praise (from Georgia, from Phoebe, from unnumbered strangers suspected

of outsize power to change my life). I believe it would be for the best if by the end of all this each (both attention and praise, I mean, which do turn out to be separable and each delectable on its own specific terms) had been thereupon voided of its potency. But such would be counter to the waveform workings of the neurotransmitters whose role in all this is all too palpable, if never knowable in detail, let alone open to successful manipulation.

(I am, recall, at the mercy of such tricks as those of which Sally and Phoebe know the ins and outs: Sally's yogic breathing, Phoebe's vacuation of the short-term memory (which I disobeyed, thinking the purpose it addressed specific to her, but found myself wrong, found myself in the instants before entering the stage for the most important time unable to find my lines anywhere, though, of course, when I stepped out and moved through everything as had been instilled with training, they were all right where I had left them, each following comfortably on the last; but on this technique of the vacuation of one's lines from the short-term memory: I aided it with my own little supporting technique-inventions, "share a secret, it doesn't have to be true" to Sally (she demurred, but my tactic's success must have been already in what it brought to her mind); "favorite childhood memory," to Phoebe (getting her dog); "favorite flower" (Phoebe to me, to which I answered "lilacs, on grounds of books I love, not to actually buy, I wouldn't even really know them in a crowd; she said she also made this distinction between favorite flowers on different planes of preference, not even knowing the name of the flowers she buys routinely). All this detail stored in the acuteness of a memory I cannot imagine being brought about by means other than these carefully-choreographed enactments of attentional diversion. It is, thus, another of countless gleaming diamond intricacies of performance as-such, such as I'd never considered it before, the countless glimpse-gifts, I mean, that I owe to Georgia (and to John, to Joseph, to Phoebe, and to the other treasures at these rehearsals and performances whom I'd never expected to meet). I remember, and write, with the acute self-consciousness of the scarcity and likely going-and-never-returning of all these specific intricacies. But then I always write like that. I always have the more or less explicit awareness that my chance to do so may one day and without notice evaporate, for short, for long, or for permanent, for any of an infinite range of reasons that range from the most to the least drastic (sudden death to unwitting distraction).

Thought in church that I can finally reply to Carroll Dunham, with a thought and a question born of a conversation with Fraser Brough (a remarkably sensitive gallerist), on the trip that delayed my reply

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Acuteness of this sleeplessness, in its effects on attention, memory, and glossolalia (is that the word? I mean my strange speech in these notes)—in direct proportion to the rigor of my usual monkish rhythm:

It must be noted in the same breath that I have no use of stimulants, only have once, and that only to know what this drug was at bottom, this pharmakon by which I'm surrounded whether with or without awareness. I would have done the same, for the same reason, with Prozac, for example.

The one set stigmatized for the images' putatively implicit desirability, the other not so, because implicit there would be pity for the victim—I'm talking about intrusive images (not a discrete category—all thoughts are brought, not made) erotically charged, on the one hand, and violently charged, on the other.

The proximal goal of my repeated ascensions of the mountain above my room, to which I've allotted all of my time between rehearsals and calls, is to sedate myself sufficiently, by organic means and not too-unpredictable chemical ones, to allow properly-paced and properly-"straight" play of my part ("play it straight," Georgia said; "be monkish" (that which was obviously music to my ears), monkishly poetic rather than cartoonishly; these are the two urges (the only two) on which I felt my performance last night did not make good, the two to which, I said to her at the end of last night, I am devoting today's, because I know I did well but still felt I didn't completely fulfill all her attention with which she was so movingly generous).
"My great theme, like that of all great art, is love"—"a monogamy the likes of which this world has not known, not in centuries has it been seen, not ever": I want to make a masterpiece like Dante and Joyce. The terrible difficulty—to which the troubadours (in never departing from their impossible-love trope), the Sicilians (in spinning it into ever-finer and ever more abstract pattern), Dante (in his own living Beatrice, in her death, in his Commedia's Beatrice who is unified with the bodily one in a perfection unrepeatable), and Joyce (in what one might call the "Kells rats principle," namely, "everything (Everything) in, nothing out") each found their own ingenious solution-device—is that real love is always and necessarily utterly private (in so many senses, from the ontological ones on down). How to solve it in painting? One mechanism is to instantiate perverse forms that retain their charge, expose them lucidly, and let the real light shine out around their edges; Balthus's work might be coarsely read in this way. As for my own solution, I have an embarrassment of materials but no singular genius-premise to enshrine.

2 March 2025

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That now I have no choice but to go back to what I used to do (back to my own life, that is), after 17 days' vacation; that now I cannot stomach that, because never has what I used to do been so unflatteringly compared. I can't stomach it. It is, I say it now, impossible.

Things to hang onto: The fact that the pictures from Danielle will come soon, and that John seemed sincere in his saying that they came out really good; the fact that soon too will come (I hope, or I guess) video of the play; most of all, the hope that in Broken Bow, rummaging through sticks shooting at rodents, I'll finally wash away and get beyond this stomach state, this sleeplessness, which still persists—the "end" only replaces the feeling with an afterburn, an afterimage the subject of which is still perfectly recognizable.

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Alain Delon movies, about which I'd be able to talk with Phoebe and Zack (Zach? Zac?) if I ever talk to them again (what is worst, fearful emblem of everything with everyone there, is that there was a sign interpretable as a sign that the four of us will not be friends, as, in saying goodbye, it was "see you on the 29th," as though, not before). Underneath and within his every performance, there is an angelic quality (in unity and then in tension with his capacity for sin) that might really be what holds me fixed to his every performance (his face). A quality that invites the descriptor "angelic beauty," a quality thus alike to one in Marcantonio Flaminio and one in Hardy Hill: I treasure nothing more than praise (such is my vileness if I choose to point to it, if I choose to have one to point to) and I treasure no praise so much as any which fits that same picture—and I could not fail to remember forever that John used the very same word, "angelic," freely and without hint of whatever Anna Margrét Jónsdóttir wrapped in the phrase "angel complex."

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up and down your back" there is the very same charge that my paintings need, that they lack, of which they can never have too much; there is that very same charge in that image, and even more so when it's taken with "I'm in another body who's in somebody else" and "and I'm not evil I just got this (this what?)"
"Go now let me sing of a time when": I just liked the music of that; I don't think the Odyssey's invocation of the muses is translated like that in any translation. But I was made to think of it when I thought to myself What is the common thread that really unites so many of the things I feel impelled to say, including things "about" nostalgia but also proximally the thought of attaching to a certain photo of me the words "Back before Bella cut my hair. Before ever dew was fallen" (or "back before blood was shed"?) (I like the Delilah image, and the latter draws it out more) (I also, independently of this image, like the idea of "Samson-angel." Independently of this image because I cannot lay claim to the obvious pretension (pretender), the delusion (Kinbote of me).)
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3 March 2025

Painting is like a lover in that you have to want to do something to it. With it, too, of course, never not with it (or else crime not less than murder), but can't be only with it and not also to it, because then there is no sex.
The "figure" (as in formalism, but also as in figura, figure) of a lover, whether una Donna or una domna, whether the body of Beatrice or "And there were not 'those girls', there was one face," that figure is the only one in which there is really room for everything.
Painting is like sex also in that you will never know it unless you leave it completely.
Room for everything: So that it is in a line like "every time you leave a little part of me dies," particularly set in time as it is*, that I feel every ending, of a night, of a kind of friendship that can come and go, of a kind that can't (crying hot tears as Danny walked away, visible for long, cinematically, then, I guess, set in time, on all that invented grass behind my last dorm).
[* Recourse to which durational setting painting has not, but has much else, including things that could go by Nancy's name "scansion"]
Paris over Brussels, Anthony says—the French are more forgiving of your French than are the Belgians.
Anthony did know Tala, but not Nathaniel, from the Rijksakademie.
At the Gaylord because of the concrete floor there could be an Easter vigil—no light on the

paintings whatsoever besides handheld candles and photo flashes; maybe even certain are curtained, tabernacular, like in Cérémonies commémoratives, maybe veiling the most intimate or most riskful nudities, being very careful not to overstep what I, a Catholic not blaspheming, can say about the unity central to art, love, beauty, religion. (My Catholicism is as much about how every one of the greatest artists were Catholic as it is about the monks; and not only were they, but they were also gay—Michelangelo, da Vinci, Dante. (On counting Dante: Consider certain facts about Beatrice and you will see exactly what I mean here by gay; I mean it in a generalized sense that may even include myself.))
I've already forgotten the details but while studying liberal arts at Columbia John posed for a Regen photographer (Jack Pierson) and I forget how but that might be the beginning of his Shaun-linked annals.

Document preserved as self-flagellation:

Hi Charlene, this is Tom, the Amish boy from Georgia's play. Bella and I had a grand time listening to you at the pub, and I wanted to confirm what I said then: if it's true that putting me in touch with Matt Gleason would help both you and me, then I'd absolutely love to offer him my cheap labor. I might not quite be able to offer it for free just now, because yesterday's rent was the last I have, but then again, I also probably couldn't afford to say no. If you'd like I'd also be happy to share more about my writing and interests if that would be helpful to pass along. I hope your moving plans are going well by the way—I'd be terrified just to travel that far, but it seemed like nothing to you.
Cheers!
Tom

4 March 2025

Today, with a little luck, I put to rest my play notes, Ulysses, and Pale Fire, and then I fly to Texas.

When I said how I haven't been able to sleep, and that more specifically I wake up with heart pounding at 4 a.m. and no hope of restoring it, John said, "Magnesium," and he said one or two other things, but then he said "Magnesium--cherry juice has a ton, but then you have the sugar right before bed …" Nala's electrolytes (she gives me her overstock) turn out to have plenty, so last night (among countless other techniques, including 6-hour walk in the morning, no caffeine, eating only salad after breakfast), following his advice, I slept continuously for ten hours, 9 p. to 7 a. And I'm now engaged in trying to force the return of my appetite.

"Laissez les bons temps rouler" I say as I drink my fridge's last beer at 11 a.m., having yet to pack and make phone calls, my account put four hundred dollars negative by unexpected rent this morning. I have begged for everything from meter-reading to bagel-boiling and cannot find employment.

Backstage West
Joseph and Lynn from St. Casimir want to be reminded of the performance at the end of the month. Backstage West is something he said to look up, a publication with lots of theater review?

Music

Ulysses:
Mozart Gloria
Rossini stabat mater

Bennett:
The rest is history podcast
St Paul & the broken bones
Treaty oak revival Stop & stare

10 March

Dream of figures, set somewhat in the diorama-stage manner of Poussin, but in a setting more bare and white with marblings of gray; and the figures are golden, too uniform, a single glint almost blotting out each entire figure, blinking it out, maybe a twinkle of ruby or blue, there is much exposed, a certain desire pulses or radiates but in any case gushes forth from the array, how many figures are there?, they plot out a lesson in love, a lesson which all must somehow have learned, whether the figures be named instincts or ur-exampla or personifications of Piagetian conceptions of "étages" (?) or what I would call baby-vision forms (I trod carefully so as not to go too far out on a limb and sound like I'm talking about "form constants")

Such fragments of glinting gold, gleams of love, to layer over such syntax as that in mk gee and sticky fingers, even, such syntax and guitar holding posture and the best instants where the guitar sings and such fragments attain to the status of Samson / Enkidu / in-a-river-winged-sandal / long-haired / fineboned or broadbodied exquisition-incrustation of angel-tending human form. Such fragments to interleave with the ones from the possibly-embarrassing but nevertheless necessary (and, besides, wipe-away-able if sufficiently interlayered and overlain) abovementioned sites:
Also going back as far as those gleams of the same love (then prospective, then as always, perhaps, if the only true love is so abstract as that Dante could know it) that I managed (if any) to save in a file that I've not thought of in years but which Bennett brought up this weekend and called one of the most beautiful things he'd ever read*, and, offhand, to my head in the airport and the plane, things I may have said about fish off Kauai and these things:
"there were not those girls, there was one face" together with other (earlier) Pound fragments that are likewise sufficiently abstract; "almond-white swimmers" and "water glazes the upturned nipple, as Poggio has remarked," these two necessarily in his own aged (post-Pasolini, hollow, repentant, silent, impossible) voice; and, also, to my own head, images to my own head:
"Your face and only, beyond among the bars I'm behind, you visit me and I go nowhere but in this visitation I adore, face of yours, edge of cheek, endless eyes knowing their end and mine & I only feel mine in theirs."
And: "Love from afar, / Love from afar (these two quite loud); / But you're right up against me"
And: "But what if he gets too nervous too? To, you know … what if he does too? What then?"
(Nervous: Sick and empty, can't stop moving or start eating or continue sleeping)

[* On 14 March 2025 I reread it for the first time in four years. I paste lines premonitory, re. amour de lonh. Surprised, really, to find such a notion reified even then; I didn't know how I was thinking about it then, or really even any time before I had it from the mouths of the troubadours themselves.

"His eyelids fly backward and he swallows his tongue; his hand recoils from the lever; it is

his Dulcinea, his wife, whom he has loved pure and chaste from afar these long years. How his beloved finds herself suddenly so far from home he has no time to question; his only spare seconds he spends on her eyes, which once contained his whole universe and future, now reflecting only his own soul-devouring terror."

"I'd like to think that there's something even more 'together' about dancing together when you're not together but rather separated by most of a city, dancing 'alone,' each in your respective pajamas and respective bedrooms, but sharing no less in the same dancing instant."

"... —never mind that; all he's really after is scrambling eggs for one person in particular, morning after morning, the one person in particular who will sincerely reassure him that the eggs have been scrambled well—and the selfsame one person in particular who, as he will so sincerely reassure her, has just prepared the cup of coffee that will run Starbucks out of business. / And as he explains all of this to the Arkansasian, she would have had to have been blind to miss the clouds that filled his eyes—clouds from the nose-pricking, sure, but more importantly clouds from the window, as his seat was on the aisle and hers was the window seat, so as he looked to the Arkansasian and past her, it was just seas and rolling seas of rolling clouds, clouds to fill and furnish imagination-full after imagination-full of egg-scrambling and coffee-brewing."

"... [abundantly clear to her that] this dance and anything that should come after it would be nothing but platonic. / So, afterward, as he eased his car in the direction of the part of the city that contained her house, and the clock slid into the neighborhood of 2 or 3, he built, with his unbearably abstracted words to her, sandcastles, in the empty space behind the windshield, between driver and passenger, sandcastles, above Sonic milkshakes in the cupholders, sandcastles, below the streaking highwayside neon. / And he would have had to have been blind to miss the inhabitants of these sandcastles, which were, of course, dreams of security and surplus solely for the sake of the unmet-yet one for whom he would one day be scrambling the eggs—the security to brush away the fears on her eyebrows, the surplus to buy the largest and hairiest of dogs and, on occasion, the finest and fanciest of eggs, for the better scrambling."

"Friend C, and the way in which he explained to him, as he lay between him and Friend A (Friend A having already been asleep for close to an hour), in the vacant bed of the moved-out sister of Friend B (who, too, had been asleep for close to an hour, though he in the adjoining bedroom)—the way in which he explained to him the curious state of two attracting magnets that exist egregiously on two opposing sides of a fence. The fence is by no means too thick to thwart the magnetism: each feels the pull of the other, it feels the pull in every atom of its own existence. Yet, despite the force, there is no motion: every atom in the system—magnet, fence, and other magnet all included—is perfectly and perpetually and poignantly stationary."

"... those nights over Christmas break when I stayed up on the phone with her until we shared the same sunrise from different ends of the city."

A still-powerful (to me) tensing of "amour de lonh" even though it needs (really can't do without) at least a couple changes per stanza:

Through roiling waves far in the East
Golden dragon-fins, like sails, did cut,

And with my vision faltered, raptured,
Still ever diligently I captured
The scene until the screen slammed shut.

Before my sight was from me taken,
I stole enough light to awaken;
My dreams, now alive, fling far and jail me
In present longing, chilling to the bone;
Those dreams perpetually impale me
On my own sad current state, alone.

The scorch is of cleansing Purgatorial fire
When I essay to recall, my mind on a pyre;
Mortal thoughts aren't meant to stray so far higher
Than our own time—I feel an Icarus fear;
But the human pull to climbing, invitation of a spire,
Compels me to recount the vision here.

My vantage was a lofty garden,
Mountain-top, affording up and down;
Below, on a cloud sea, a warship fleet of eleven,
And above it a castle, soaring into heaven,
And its Queen in regalia, solar corona her crown.

The castle walls were golden, and their texture resembled,
From my crag afar, endless words on a page;
Stories, creation—and my finite heart trembled
At the thought of reading them to the end of ages' age.

I was drawn to make reading them my Defining Act;
Though I'd have to descend through the misty shrouds
And traverse the bristling war-sea of clouds,
Succeeding, I knew, would redefine Fact.

So mists floated me down from the hanging garden
Until tongues of cloud licked at my heel,
And up from the waves I saw needle-bows spiking,
And fanning junk battens, awe-striking,
Towering ships of the Red Seal.

From eleven directions an admiral voice resounded
And sought me out; in my throat my heart stayed—
With questions full-ranging my very soul was hounded,
As though, in the selfsame, my heart Osiris weighed.

The hull-walls had converged to form a Paradise gate,
And the forty-two judges finished the tally on their slate;
Access to the seeker would now be granted,
His conscience had proved to be firmly planted,
And the junk-gate swung back to cannon-blasts eight.

Upwards in wonder, to the castle from the clouds,
With feet fixed I ascended in vision only;
There the queen reigned alone, no attendants, no crowds,
And a tear in her bright eyes revealed her, and her only.

But in the eyes still blazed a flame that suffers no shame,
And so it was fear that still burned in me—
And instantly now the castle walls I could see,
And it was then that the torrents came.

Rainfall of sand, word-texture resolved fine—
Your castle, sand, O queen of mine!
Thunder through fog on the clearest day—
To thrust me now back into my life,
Into the valley of the gun, and strife,
My heartstrings still pull, clean, away.

And other fragments amenable to my particular sensibility right now:

"Naked and eyelids-peeled and my heart exposed to it and ears clean of wax with certainly no rope binding my arms to the mainmast I looked wide-eyed into my own wide-eyed reflection in the retina of Thelxiepeia (not the cornea, and that gets to the core of it) and saw a Woman painted across the heart of hearts of the one, I, myself, who came from the other side of the retina-reflection. And the Woman had, of course, at this point, given birth to her child and was very much clothed oh so very very clothed in exactly what she was clothed in exactly what was she clothed in; clothed in the sun.—it is very distressing."

“This meant there was only a singular possible direction for her relative to me, and—be I as unwilling to leave her to that course as a neck-deep flounderer could be; be she, for her part, no less unwilling to be left, and stubborn as rocks to boot—well… Clio sorted it out with hands gentle—gentle, to be sure—yet unremitting—yes, unremitting, and if we’re breaking it down to chemistry, more than commensurate parts unremitting to every part gentle.””

I would attach this as a revealing prehistory of the thing I keep saying whereby all good art is that which makes one’s world feel richer and habitable, and all bad art is definitionally what makes it feel empty and deflated and mechanically same-filled. “Twenty-three months ago I strove bravely but vainly to put the concept into words, carving two baskets in the air and labeling one ‘Inside’ and the other ‘Outside’ and sorting various example behaviors into their respective baskets in an attempt to reveal the kernel of the matter which was, as I was insufficiently aware, the criterion of the sorting. I have this quaint Quixotic exercise in ink before me as I speak to you. It should not go without being noted that I did not fail, twenty-three months ago, to remark on the evident link between this ‘Inside’/‘Outside’ thing and my periodic jaunts across the threshold of hysteria. Anyway, that’s the whole aesthetic business as far as I yet have words for it.”

“When all’s exhaled its time and comes
To rest, beneath a sunset pale
And blue, with grass below to match—
With you, and neon hair, we rest
To know—
To glow, and slow.

Dusk grass beneath a towel that holds,
Within its texture, everything,
Embankmentside, your quiet family,
And you, as you smile through, back-lit—
Recline,
And close our eyes.”

“How can you look out over blue lakewater in the afternoon and expect an answer? The ripples and chops will hold onto their silence, smug, like a dachshund with its grip on a squirming snake, firm teeth at the base of my scaly skull. As feet sink under the sunny glare into a water-chilled rock shore, latent midnight lucidity remains unattended, unexpected. / The turning is parabolic, after the reminiscing, after the bonfire disperses its guests deep into the night—from blind to seeing, from tepid to secure, in a motion that lifts, turns the stomach, then sinks. A feeling of falling backward and downward into a beach chair as I lie on it, a foot above the same water-chilled finger-lake pebbles which now leave center stage to the stars, icy-bright, hanging plaintively high.”

The first part of this I paste as an indispensable piece of the picture of what Canterbury Ct is to me. The second part I think is important as a sign, retrospectively legible, of why I ended up devoting my life, consciously and as Love, to Painting. Crucially, however, I have in the intervening time found an extremely delicate calculus which redeems not all but certain "things artificial or cerebral."

"Elysium.

In an effort to specify exactly what heights my soul has reached, I monologue to my sister: "The smell is water from a garden hose, healthy grass and the cool moist firm dirt under it, maybe a little bug spray, and the air that's not cold or warm or humid but has light shadows of all three of those. / "Eating dinner on that green, purple, and yellow towel with suns on it" (My audience knows the towel because she was there) "in the backyard at sunset in the shade under those trees. Playing in the plastic folding hose-filled pool or the sprinkler in the stretch of grass where the fire pit is now at our grandparents' house by the lake. The space behind the small stone statue of St. Francis behind the pool at Canterbury Ct. / "Playing with our cousins on the golf course behind that house—barefoot, the short perfect grass there especially, and the dusk without mosquitos that is neither dark nor bright—the soft light and the air and the short soft cool grass …"

Eden as Nod.

Those matters being passing, Heisenbergian, fleeting on an essential level, I climbed a wrung or two lower on Jacob's ladder to narrate a more stationary brand of paradise, as I saw it; but even in this I was withheld, left to look on from the East.

I continue my monologue:

"There is an unobtainable goal that resembles to me, now, paradise; I think of it when they speak of hermits, the Desert Fathers, or the mendicants, but mostly hermits of Thoreau's brand; I imagine a life of working strictly physically, like an early Cistercian, like Westley at the beginning of the movie—to give up all the world for the simple pleasure of foregoing pleasure, for a life entirely detached—unhinged—from all things artificial or cerebral.

"But in this, if you'll allow me to cry in my plush palace bed for a moment, I feel obstacles insurmountable—namely, all things artificial or cerebral. …""

This one has a lot to clean up, but I want to preserve it because it is strange and, even though I was only sixteen then (at the time of the memory that at seventeen I put in these words), still there is an irreducible active conflict in reading the words--like that I still couldn't read them to Bella, even though she read them years ago. What does this active magnetic repulsion have to say about the abstraction particular to the analytic of "the body of Beatrice"?

"But, yeah, it's one of those days I guess—one of those days. And I'd be surprised if tomorrow's not one of those days too, and the next day—so on for a while, I think, if we're extrapolating from the state of things at this particular freezeframe." The boy had been going on for quite a

while, knees folded, sitting by the edge of the water in a scrap of June shade.

"I can understand exactly why you're having one of those days just by the way you keep talking about her nose. You're smitten, or something, buddy." The boy's friend finished reeling in his line and dropped another cast.

"But it isn't even that I want to be. Look, the thing is this. I just want to talk to her a lot. Her conversations are attractive—not that they're pretty or appealing; more that they're magnetic, attracting literally—they cause me to be closer. Maybe I'm just projecting it all because she likes me or whatever but anyway she's kind of a supergirl and I'm impressed by what she can do and the eyes—the eyes—I find it so uncommon, eyes that actually convey, in themselves, sharpness and depth in one, intelligence I guess, or just seeing maybe. And the magnetism of course is due not in the least to her smiling laugh with the nose and the eyes—"

"The more you talk like that, the more it seems to me that you want to be, even when you start off by saying you don't." The friend had paused between casts, catching the pith in a thought he'd just had and liked: Hah, he's hooked.

And the boy pressed on: "There's this weird image I get in my head, and I know you'll find it strange but I have to spell it out anyway. It's sailfish every time she laughs. There's so much quick, such athleticism and coiled-up potential snapping loose, in the sound and motion of it—the laugh, of course, being sonic and physical; only half of it is the music and the other half is how you can see it embodied in her collar bone and face. So much turning and snapping and lunging and whipping—and grace, preserved throughout, even elevated, lithe grace primary, throughout—that all I can think of is the kinetics of sailfish.

"Yesterday evening I went to a movie with her, and I had somewhere to be in Fort Worth afterward, so I was driving west for almost forty miles straight, right in the middle of rush hour. But it was one of those cases—I'm sure you know the feeling—where I could not have been more content to sit and stare, even with nothing in front of my face. Bask, I guess, is a word more apt than 'sit' here. But in this case, it wasn't nothing in front of my face, because the sunset perfectly lined up with my serendipitous forced silence, as well as the independently self-perpetuating basking state. Three things that would each have been captivating enough in their own right, but layered one over another over the other—and I believe I've explained my theory of the Layer Cake Effect to you before—unforgettable. The sky looked like a golden flight of sails, like a flight of sailfish dispersing in slow motion over the course of an hour. Sails, or maybe pages—yeah, pages. And her laugh danced over the unfolding of the pages of the golden book."

I preserve this fragment for exactly the same reason as the sailfish one, i.e. because it is a trace of a feeling I once had and it is somewhere between totally inaccessible to me and (in any way) accessible to me (though, again, there are stylistic problems to trim):

"After delivering cookies and flowers, the boy buckled his seatbelt and merged onto the highway, headed home. As an analysis of a mental freezeframe from that moment would reveal, as the still evening air glided over his windshield, his outlook in that instant was really quite photogenic. His line of reasoning was like this:

I see that the thought isn't at home in this place, but I am thinking it anyway—knowing nothing about what my "friendship" with her is like in the future, and given the overwhelming likelihood that our paths will diverge widely in mere moments—but still, in response to my

seeing her as the most genuinely and thoroughly nice girl there is—how her first words on the phone were "Sure, is everything OK?," etc.—What I want isn't more than to make her happy, only in the style of getting the tastiest cookies, searching the most thoroughly for the height of beauty in a single bouquet, asking her to prom; hoping that she feels the same way talking with me as I do talking with her—and really my only hurdle in all this is that she is "divine," and that at some point I might not want that, how can I know. But truly I think I can manage to hold onto it. And so this night, this wish, is what I amount to."

And this one for the same reason still: "I turn over and over in my head the memory of my surprise at the extra half second on her porch; we said goodbye for the third time, and she held on for a half second longer than I expected—the half second contained in it everything that needed to be left unsaid."

And this one for the same reason still: "He sat on the doorstep of her vacant house. He had been sitting on the doorstep of her vacant house for one hour and sixteen minutes. It was 6:04. She had told him he could come retrieve his jacket at 5:00. He had come with some cookies and a cup of hot chocolate. The chocolate had not been hot since 5:10.

"She does nothing timel- timely-ly- timely… Can I make 'timely' into an adverb? Timelily. I'll buy her a bouquet of Timelilies. That should work. She loves lilies."

She did arrive eventually. He somewhat expected her to be apologetic, but he wasn't upset when she wasn't."

Another thing integral to the "body of Beatrice" problematic: I still hold to this particular step of the analytic, I add that it is of a piece with the "all-importance (this quote is not precise) of the concrete, the real presence, the historical existence, to the 'Catholic Imagination,'" and I am surprised to have hit on it then:

"Since I can never perfectly fully know you, if I love you then I love my idea of you. You could never perfectly know me, either, not least because I could never even perfectly know myself.
(If you lie to me about yourself, and I love who I think you are, then my own love is no less real.)

So then, since circumstance and situation have so much influence on my idea of you, I do not fall in love with simply you as a person, but rather with you and with all the circumstance of my experience of you.

Put most broadly, people are never simply themselves to anybody, even to those they know most intimately. The implications of this are very far-reaching as I see it."

[And then I immediately attached to it this note, which is the germ of the "prismatic self" and "micro-encounters" premise:]

"Books as only existing when they are read, only ever existing as the way they are received by the individual reader, not being anything meaningful when they exist as pure reality in and of themselves, detached from a reader's reading and impositions and 2nd-person chance connections."

These next two I have to link to a note in my “Georgia play notes” (see link above), which smiles and winces at my indelible particular relation to “attention” which I here name joke-grandiose-forebodingly my “hamartia”:

“2:36 a.m. … rather, opened his eyes and ended his charade of sleep; he’d been lying awake in the dark for hours—clicked a lamp on, and penned the following manifesto on a page, neatly but without hesitation:
If you could all please look at me,
(And be impressed with my humility,)
There are things (I think) I wish you’d see.
I’m lonely in the company of admirers,
    because (If they admire) they never quite understand.
If I weren’t me I know I’d want to be,
But that’s easier to remember than to care about.
I’m overworked, and idle, too;
I’d fail while daring greatly;
Call me golden boy, Galahad, please, if you like.
By no means do I, all of me, make sense.
I often feel deeply, but never self-assuredly or comfortably.
I’d like your attention please. I suffer without your voice directed for me.
Think of me, because I am thinking of you.
    (And because otherwise I’m wasting time.
My stomach drops from under me if I waste time.
I’m conscious of it as it slips through my fingers,
    but Sisyphus can do no other than let it roll back down.
The difference is I will die.)
Meanwhile to talk to you without hurry
    is my paradise where I am not now.
But still I love to smell sweet pine needles
And to walk on them.”

And:
“... And now I must acknowledge my deep brokenness by saying that, through this my foggy and cracked lens, today is as good as it gets—today, when I was told that she thinks I am the perfect boy. Golden boy, Galahad. And God knows that it may be that this is the very height and extent of my desire in these things—Do I even care for her? Or anyone. Why do I care so much about what people think of me, and why this obsession with perfection?
    The kernel of the ponderings, the punchline: How did I get here, and how can I fix it?
    But this question was left more unanswered than not, as he could cobble together no

response as emphatic as the question.

Further, the endeavor was stifled by the realization that followed directly on the heels of the question: the boy would never be able to draw this particular struggle out of the confines of his own head, because there's something essentially fraught about the proposition of raising this point in conversation with any friend. The very doing so would inevitably be, itself, a bid at vindicating himself in some way in the eyes of that friend, as he'd have no choice but to try, somewhere along in the process, to eliminate any doubts of his sincerity in ameliorating his attention-seeking, thus fueling his omnipresent urge to Look Good (the very object of this whole proposed conversation …). So dropped, the matter resolves itself into a bit of a muted thorn in the boy's candidly well-meaning psyche—a thorn that, with so little commotion, calls into question the entirety of the candor and the well-meaning."

And another thing to link up to a separate part of the "Georgia play notes," the part about how I always find myself in the key of lament, always find myself trying to figure out anything, no matter what, within the strains and refractions of a certain nostalgia. [The references in that document are: "Go now let me sing of a time when" (&ff.); and: "The 'figure' … of a lover … is the only one in which there is really room for everything. … Room for everything: So that it is in a line like "every time you leave a little part of me dies," particularly set in time as it is, that I feel every ending, of a night, of a kind of friendship that can come and go, of a kind that can't (crying hot tears as Danny walked away, visible for long, cinematically, then, I guess, set in time, on all that invented grass behind my last dorm)."]

"The boy stares intently into his friend's half-worried face, acquiring a bit of the Old Testament eyes, wild but underscored with unquestionable sincerity. He's somewhat lacking in coherence, but he's onto something and he knows it.

"Poignancy I said. That's what it's all about. It's all about poignancy."

"Don't ask me why, but somehow I know exactly what you mean to say, even though you aren't saying it." The friend sounded sarcastic but he wasn't.

"Good to hear. I'm trying, and that's what counts, right." They shared a laugh and turned to lighter fare.

But there was a subterranean pool, untapped, under the surface of the conversation, the surface of which the boy could not scratch, though he feebly tried.

The pool contained a thing, friendship, love, that made itself known in no uncertain terms, then made known in terms no less certain that it would never be;

It contained the perfectly-orchestrated muted despair that reveals the master's hand behind the words at work;

It contained souls too beautiful for this world, who cry out in pain, in paint, on stolen canvases against all that they know;

It contained Housman's athlete and his brief garland;

It contained Keats's full-ripen'd grain that high piled books, in charact'ry, did not—will never—hold.

But the love that would never be—that was the reality that, incidentally, was engulfing the boy at present, and it was against this backdrop that he spoke."

This, I knew then (see last line), and still wouldn't begin to deny now, was the best thing I could then write, and still I am surprised by its beauty, still I know and return to nothing so much as to this same nostalgia in which I know then and insist now (with or without belief--i.e., with faith) holds in itself somehow the key to everything, to art and to desire and to love (in this, I guess, a guess bolstered by Beckett, I agree with Proust).

Summer Day, Brilliance of Childhood

Happiness in the way the silvery asphalt of the street looks up close—thank God they haven't resurfaced it. The street, of course, in front of the house I've lived in since I was born, whose days are numbered. The street called "Memorial" with no Dr, no St, no Ln—just "Memorial." And connected to it is Geneva—Geneva, a connector road no more than sixty feet long, with only two street signs to its name—and one sign says "Geneva Ln," the other "Geneva Dr." And on the other side of Geneva is "Calendar," "Callender," or "Calender," spelled each of three ways at various points along its length.

These streets held Fourth of July parades of twenty or thirty people—me and my neighbors on our bikes, with training wheels then not, and our parents watching by jugs of lemonade on folding tables.

This was the same era, maybe a little earlier, as that of the walks down the length of Memorial all the way to the creek hidden under the trees there, behind the fences of the backmost houses—it was a secret creek and only we knew about it—for the express purpose of looking at the creek. We had no fishing poles (not that there were fish in what was really a drainage ditch anyway); we had sticks though, and we'd carry them and walk and grow tired and hot and come back home and make strawberry lemonade, maybe, from powder and a pitcher in our fridge.

Years later, the Summer Day retains an identical brilliance. To sleep in and smell the green of grass on a breeze through the house; and sunglasses, half-wet hair, arms baking in the sun by the pool at my grandmother's house, the same cousins noisily preserving childhood in the pool while I can do nothing but watch with a smile and half a tear; barefoot driving with warm feet after I, barefoot, try to teach the youngest cousin, barefoot, how to ride a bike in front of the house while both of our swimsuits still drip.

Summer Night, Wonder of Time

These things about the Summer Day are a few of the innumerable cords that tie together to create from nothing the fabric of a Summer Night. This Summer Night exists over the dinner table that I have in my car—that is, while I drive and you sit in the passenger seat, drive specifically on streets with stoplights now, specifically stoplights that could not be more familiar to me, stoplights on Bowen Rd, stoplights that when taken with a long-exposure camera are the geometric eyes of angels, lines; stoplights that still exist during the daytime, but are something entirely set apart at night. And there are streetlights alongside the stoplights, but streetlights, unlike stoplights, only exist at night. And to the long-exposure vision of a Summer Night the white streetlights are geometric hair of angels suspended in the velvet void of the fabric of the Summer Night—the fabric, now, of course, being space all the way, a three-dimensional space

with no ceiling, absolutely no ceiling, and the absence of ceiling is palpable even from inside the car, inside the car where I am with you—and the defining characteristic of you is that your mind clings circumspect to the the things I deign to put to words—and those things are the fibers of the Summer Day, among other things—and you will milk these same notions that I have for all that they are worth, and you will do that in the same way that I will, because we two will really sincerely truly fully veritably Know the selfsame thing itself about Summer, about Day, about Night now, and about the dinner table.

. . .

If you were wondering, this was the crux of it all. I continue to speak but this was my word.

]

"Look, a death animal" (in the spirit of poeti latini proclivity for fructive fertile prolific personification) And other things making good on the syntactic promise of what I loved in "death process"

The great aspiration is some merger among Johnny cash mk gee yhwh nail gun sticky fingers and Rolling Stones and Pizza tapes finger style. Only then can the guitarist-angel posture and the mystery and the purehearted texanism all be made good upon at once

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Things I've been alerted to by random means:

The journal gallery? Ollie (clay?)
Kelly Akashi?
Issy wood at werner
Lorraine Nicholson? Jed? in Laurel canyon, Ed ruscha etc
Humphries at Marks
Twombly at Maison d'art, Cologne doctor's collection; is the mike Kelley show still open?
Tango room? In Dallas right by carbone
Should have seen Alex da Corte at FW modern, Sadie Coles and Matthew Marks artist
The jewel? Joule? In Dallas - Wolfson dinner back idk when

VSF founder Esther is running for congress from Orange County?

Carol Rama
Victor Boullet
Piper Bangs
Lakshmi
Fiona Connor
Jason yates
Losel yauch
John garcia
Bradley Kronz
Nora berman
Elizabeth englander
Valerie Giampietro
Ariana Demetropoulos
Anne Wehrley Bjork

Castle Gallery
Half gallery
Fernberger (I've been, they had the Hantaï girl; Les animaux (Wehrley Bjork) looks good
Stars (inactive? Is this who Adam (Tiffany's Door) admired? No--that was Jenny's)
Commercial street gallery
Von ammon
Del vaz projects

Gracie Hadland
Untitled (halo)
Gardiners island film the end
2nd cannons publications

15 March 2025

At Soldes:
    Nicholas
Lakshmi
Fiona (Australian? Artist, mentioned Johan munn at As it stands) [Added that evening after something I saw on Instagram: "Must be Fiona Connor. New Zealand"]
I loved Lakshmi for the extremely delicate but totally idiosyncratic mood, haze, etc that she

conjured through means which are with very slight adjustment open to wildly different results (cf Hantaï, enormous difference with Auerbach, and the tachisme she was looking at)

Gaga RS:

These Koether pixel works cannot work for me as re-symbolist paintings open to a Bois-eye because anything that, like these, unlike any Mondrian, is FULLY gridded, just seems to disintegrate, cannot cohere, and neither succeeds nor fails to balance but rather does not even move toward that target in order to hit or miss it. So the "after Freud after Turner" is a hollow gesture.

Lisson:

Did not like Kelly Akashi even though the lace glass flower was so delicately crafted. In fact I want that Malevich-icon-esque corner to be a cautionary tale to me: That hanging (the nails! The crucifixion and ongles that I would love, but that here are the ruiner) does not work in a white cube. (I know clou vs ongle btw)

16 March 2025

"Saints and Poets" at Mulrooney
https://www.meganmulrooney.com/saintsandpoets

Victor Boullet:

With __ at Castle
At 2nd cannons (project space, by appointment) https://www.2ndcannons.com/projects

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I did not know my castmate Veronica Gelbaum was a painter, but the first two of these (maybe even despite the coarse canvas grain) get a clear juicy beauty that Chardin's fraises stand for (for me), and all three of them, because of their convex-feeling perspective and something about the

way the canvas frame is aligned, achieve an impact that is really rare in painting, even when painters seek it out.

She was paired with Richard Hawkins (whose paintings I didn't know, but who combines Lassnig, Scharf or Saul, and delicate devotional beauty-desiring scrapbooking on canvases that come out unexpectedly coherent) by Ramsey Alderson (whose Tiffany's Door exhibition I really admired).

Ramsey wrote a long press text. According to the website's "past" tab this is the Gaylord's first-ever show. (The seond was about rabbit burrows and it was, like Hawkins's paintings, surprisingly coherent--a surprise not because of underestimation but because of the sheer intensity and range of components.)
The Future is Bright is the title of this 2021 show and moments of relatability this intense come rarely: the only one like it I can think of is what Luke Herrigel wrote for Eyrie Alzate. (Something I read yesterday by Victor Boullet, still struck me because I was surprised how much I related to it as a painter, but its scale feels smaller than what Alderson and Herrigel each achieve for me. Here is Boullet's anyway: "Today I am looking at [the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II] as subject matter, or a wishful in. By in, I simply mean a possibility to continue as a painter. I see myself as a spectator snorkeling on this inside of this spectacle, but sucking air from the outside in order to survive as a painter")
"What do you do when there is nothing to do? How do you get up and face the day, every single day, day in and day out? When there's no moves left to make, what do you make? After being overwhelmed by dread for years, I had a realization that it's an inherited trait. That I'm no longer content playing some-one else's endgame. Why should I feel so hollow? I can look to those around me to see who has figured out a way to live. Scratching out personal meaning and trying to relate is vital. Exploring, revering, laughing at and playing with history we can find ourselves

and make sense of this cruel and unforgiving hell we call Earth."
And then he puts my "espresso cup" (which I struggle so hard again and again to describe, resorting to imperfect approximations like "relation art to life" and "oscillation") into unmistakable words. "What could I write about Richard? His paintings and his friendship remind me every day that what we're doing, what we're expressing, is real. That it's not enough to simply illustrate one theory or the next but that you must be living and feeling and bleeding with the world, with your friends and lovers."

Actual painting ideas, each just needing two to three more layers of superposition (but don't, of course, make it look like parker ito brett ginsburg etc):

Plans for five new paintings. 2 pairs and one more.

2 based on two different fannings-out of the Indonesian (?) stump figure in the DMA, for which I'll need to choreograph a request for images from Dad or Lauren. (The one who "holds his sex.") In one, they will all face the circle's center, which is somewhat nearer to the panel's center than is the viewer. In the other, they will all face outward from their plotted center, which will be located at a projection into perspectival space. In each, there will likely need to be some kind of bumpers on the panel's left and right edges; they ought to correspond to him formally, balancing any unevennesses resultant from the results of the respective fannings-out.

Bronzino's mysterious love allegory with just the most erogenous points, and their immediate component-environs (not just some radius but rather painting out from them with semantic as well as chroma-weight sensitivity), painted in; the bulk of the panel will remain white, not raw gesso but rather white overpainted over the silverpoint under drawing and the vast majority of any gridding I must lay down. And the parts that are painted will be gold, some alizarin and cadmium reds, and some ultramarine and cerulean blues. Maybe a sliver or two of green. This is my palette, or one of the versions of what is, really, ultimately and permanently, to be my palette —the palette around which Mondrian, de Kooning, Ashtary, Asie-Matisse, watercolor-Cézanne, backcountry-Grotjahn (?), and certain often-noted others converge; and the version of it here in question is to be jointly determined by Bronzino himself, on the one hand, and the whole corpus of my notes on this palette, on the other. But white—or rather, many under- and over-painted whites—is to dominate, and to qualify and intensify all the other colors (in other words, is to make them what they are).

Last pair: Having to do with things seen in the architecture of this very gothic (in the bastardized Romantic sense, not in the architectural historian's sense; I.e., it is spooky, and in a very Los Angeles way at that) church, which I am to designate by means of street names in the titles, plotting a decodable locus:

"Sunset and Cassil I" and "Sunset and Cassil II", for example (I can adjust the details, maybe).

I took the photographs that will serve me. The ceiling, in one or more of its view-angles, is to be the main dispositif of each of the pair. The windows, including the stag one!, are not to be absent from either. Both the windows and the ceiling have a quality in common with both a peacock feather (or really almost any bird feather) and with the most impactful of Grotjahn's "Faces": cannot be properly called a chevron, but in any case that may be the word that in a single word gets you the closest. Probably one of the pair will use the aisles—distorted, so that they become almost as bumpers; doubled and reflected, with, maybe, the altar's front step (twice) horizontally or vertically traversing the center of the canvas as an axis of symmetry, this probably on just one of the pair. Note that as always I can't preserve absolute symmetry. Still yet to be determined is how to bring this up to my new standard of sexual charge. Perhaps look deeper into the aspect of the parallax in the rafters, the way in which that rhythm seems almost to breathe. In any case, probably find that charge by pareidolically hallucinating it in, and then drawing out (heightening) whatever I in that way see.

Be with me Paraclete
Fr.'s story (at Sunset and Cassil) (of calling a Costco employee down from his ladder because he used to sit always in the same pew but had been missed for some months; upon meeting by the hotdog line he cried to Fr. and told him he was no longer worthy to attend) and how even I feel the same apartness* and look back on even the recent past as a lost ideal, a modest one but nevertheless elevated.
But also the recent past as a time completely empty of the Spirit which, as I've said** (though I made its name interchangeable), has been with me almost unceasingly these past three-odd weeks.
[* 'Can I say of myself "and I'm not evil but I got this desire" now as ever, now more than ever, now as ever, now more than ever, in particular, I can dare this step, in the company of two other lines or facts, "each time you leave a little part of me dies" and that "Alesis" cannot really fail to resurface a fundamental fracture, a slivering, a covered-over breakage (not a break in me but, worse, a break of me)—according to a certain analytic, that is, an analytic that, it happens, I've chosen to die on the hill of retaining ("a monogamy the likes of which …," etc.), an analytic that feels right now newly difficult.']
[** 'For years, maybe three or four of them, I have felt a certain lostness, a certain loss I mean, a loss of a version of myself, a loss which now feels undone, myself redeemed, a feeling years-unfamiliar. The now-covered-over (for just a moment made as though never there--and it may return without warning or explanation but in any case it is right now as though the farthest thing from my world) difference I could describe in a few ways, including by invoking an angelic goodness, or the power of the Spirit, but each of these puts in play more than is necessary. Really, celui qui me manque is just an energy. I use this word, I repeat, in a very specific sense--I repeat--"When once I said that caffeine is the motor-force in and behind all things, really what I was elevating and universalizing was not caffeine but whatever remains as the in-common distillate when you overlay love, and caffeine, and desire, and lust (the German word, not the English cognate, the German not necessarily carrying the English note of perversion), and then remove from the picture everything in love, and in caffeine, and in desire, and in lust, that is not in common with all of the others. The center of the Venn rose of these four."']

Finished Kaufman Unbearable lightness of being after 3 months.

About two-thirds through, watching Day-Lewis, Binoche, and Olin, the control that they achieve even at such rarefied heights (erotic joy like that just never makes it onto film, and yet somehow they play it different again and again and never miss)—I was about to just write "this is pretty much as good as it gets" and file it away as a five-star. But then I started thinking that it was all too perfect, that I was (alongside the above admiration) also partly swept up in a too-easy romanticization of everything about this moment, all the textures, postures, "events," clothes, apartments, parks, skylines, that perfect dog. But really can I just cheer Kundera on? How can I ever know his "situation" well enough to affirm my five stars not just on the actors but also on the story, his story that, I think, just turns out to be too specific to a time-local politics for me to take as a perfection-exemplum of my own? Not, of course, that a politically committed work can never attain a universal beauty. Just that, this time, giving it five stars would make me feel shallow. In any case, this still might be the closest movies have gotten to achieving their own "Mars and Venus" (Botticelli), so far. Not that anyone tried to do exactly this, but they should, so I'm glad I can pretend they did, because if they did, they did well.

18 March 2025

This morning, heedless again of my injunction [this note, and the previous mention of the same injunction, which I should probably name more fully here so it's not obscure, may both be considered accounts of sleep-waking fit for oscillations.], I was gnawed from all sides by the mundanity, the banality, the unthinkability of mustering the same effort day after day. I had voiced dismay when Bella, preparing to sleep last night, had voiced precisely the same fatigue, a prospective fatigue, the unthinkability of all the work that lies ahead, the fun work (eventual marriage, eventual acquisition of a home) no less than the rest. She voiced it without despair, but still I received it as an utter rejection, vicious devaluation, of the day we had had--the most perfect and most simple in recent memory.

(I cannot recount it here; that would be like taking an iPhone photograph of the Mona Lisa, pointless; but it involved clouds which I called saffron and then, clocking my too-easy imitative epithet, revised to butterscotch (because, really, the gold was softer than and not so vivid as saffron); it involved the moving-around of all furniture in our apartment, the replacement (refreshing) of nearly everything on our walls; earlier, job applications and lying on the roof in the not-to-be-missed false-summer sun while Bella worked; and that walk with the clouds ended up at Arbat where we acquired lavash, wild mint (product of Armenia) for tea, and tzatziki lebni, to complete the preparation of the meal which had been begun by our side-by-side chopping of

tomato, avocado, and onion, and their thorough inmixing with chickpea, olive oil, garlic, and lemon.)
But this is not even what I set out to record. To tinker together an adequate image of my proceeding from sleep (sound but permeated by vaguely unpleasant dreams) into wake, I just needed to tense the tension above to establish a bassline. What was more present than this--or, if only equally present, was more attended-to--in my mind, as I cracked my eggs into olive oil and later laid them on lavash, was just a pair of songs, playing internally not in full but in some proportion around half, fragments following upon each other not necessarily in true sequence, not necessarily without repetition.
Playing certain songs from Graceland, as well as many others by Paul Simon, but primarily those with the shining guitar, my father determined in car rides to middle school and early high school that, when I belatedly heard in 2019 songs by the band Vampire Weekend (whose most important comparison is Graceland), I would like them.
Liking them in 2019 determined that I would listen to their new album upon its release in 2024, and that, even though I would like it less than what I liked before, I would still play it from time to time, it would still mean something to me, and its songs' words and guitar lines would become reproducible to my mind without outside prompting.
So the two songs were, in non-strict order (i.e. it is mostly but not completely true that the first of the echoes of the latter made themselves present in my mind after the last echoes of the former), "Pravda" from Only God Was Above Us and "Graceland" from Graceland.

I read Sean Tatol's review of another Sam Fogg-curated exhibition at Luhring Augustine (I was made aware of this one, like the others, only because of Tatol), this one titled Treasures of the Medieval World. Tatol's thoughts were worthwhile, probably much like some of the ones that I would be thinking in a room like this. But in addition to those, I would have been overwhelmed by the sight of this work by Tilman Riemanschneider, one of only four "Individuals" that Michael Baxandall treats respectively in the four sections of the final chapter of his The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany.

This may be useless and doomed and only to be lost, but this is the best I can do for now--I need some place to distill and annotate and begin to aggregate (by superposition) by existing trobata, mainly to further the long-on-hold process of refinement that is necessary (constant pruning) in order to have the requisite forms and structures available when a canvas in need (like the one

waiting on my wall now for six months) cries out for something so specific (something the finding of which--finding long-since begun (it is called a “trobatum” after all), but a finding in the throes of which we all (painter painting etc.) still are--is the definitive type of act of my painting process, to use rough-and-ready terms that don’t satisfy me).

trobata refining

The problem is I would do this by printing, cutting, drawing, etc. but I can’t without losing some color details and resolution which may be relevant to the finding in question, from time to time. So this is unsatisfactory but the best I can do for now.

I will paint over my Mondrian experiment (the cropping of New York City rendered painstakingly with dollar-store masking tape and dollar-store acrylics, unmixed, for the sake of experiment, for the sake, that is, of establishing a workable starting point for experiments that could take me into the heights of Pointillist-dream plaid-recombination, all this on a roughly five-by-eight-inch dollar store canvas, one whose crisply folded edges I liked because they are so much better than (just because different from) what you can find at art supply stores). I will paint over it in oil. This will completely overwrite its meaning, and it will finally become my talisman, that which it was meant to be but never became. I will turn it into the emblem of that specific variant of the red-yellow-blue palette that I am currently working on building everything upon.

Grotjahn, martinez, Wood. Why is it that I can’t think of any others active as conduits for such firehose beauty in painting? (Why is it I want to? Because it shouldn’t be the case that the conduits are monopolized by the Gagosian Blum Kordansky sphere. It’s too much to be a coincidence.)
And yet I’m in their thrall, wanting to mainline their paintings, their words, their reviews, anything.

Here is the thing: the “lamp” theory is not completely wrong. That’s why it’s such a trap, such a hard myth (that art has value (beauty) if and only if it is authentic expression of some interior state) to replace with a truer account. The truer account being mine, fabbro, re-Symbolism, whereby, contrary to some oversimpified theorizations thereof, expression does play some role; it’s just that precisely the only thing that can properly said to be “expressed” is sheer beauty itself, the raw light (“light; and the first light”) within each person (each, not all! Nancy: each time anew, every instant or instance non-interchangeable). Yes, that is inside, and it is brought into the material world where previously it was not, just as gold in the alchemical

formula. the trick where the "lamp" account fails is that art is not simply the expression of anything. in fact it is not any expression of anything at all apart from this beauty itself, the making-material of the person itself, the ongoing making-real of the shape of the prism, only ever (each time anew) by means of a refraction and a sensibility-mediated registration of an index thereof. the shape of the prism, the person within the body and mind, these are precisely the same. As is "tensile light," which is not omnipresent light but rather its instantiation such as it inheres (when it does) in a prism (which can be a person or an art object). "soul" is the outmoded word for what i now call "person," and outmoded only because philosophy (Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, & co., in particular) has failed it.

Inexpressibly deflated. I was going to . I can't help but think the sense of unwellbeing with which I woke up has not just to do with the nervous-bad-news-unpleasant dreams (that hazy impression is all I remember of them) but also with a vague sense that things aren't going my way--not that these things amount to any "thing" "going" any "way" at all, but what I have my mind on is the constantly increasing weight of all my sent job applications without response (one exception: Kordansky kindly sent a rejection letter for Gallery Attendant exactly four months and five days after I submitted), the fact that John's photographer friend's magazine called me Tom Wolfe (which, incidentally, is kind of fun--I love wolves and pseudonyms) and I still haven't been shown the images despite asking twice, the vague difficulty I'm having in getting to see Valerie Keane's show at his place.

I was even going to paint today. Now I don't feel I can. It's not just my mind but my arms and back that feel incapable.

I'm even having a hard time writing down something I thought while walking. I just walked too far. But I loved the sun, and felt that with the scent I carried, sweat and sunscreen, I was the very embodiment of summer moving through those empty green hills.

What I thought while walking was: How to describe what I guess is a non-obvious step, from the starting point of affirming the importance of beauty (or quality; or, there's a couple other names that some would say are interchangeable here), to my own standard for quality in painting, which I often refer to by a couple of different shorthands: "tautness," "tensile harmony," "active (or charged) balance." How to explain this? Is there a history I can point to? I'd like to say: Just look at any good painting and, if you have trained your eye, you will see it; if you've lost what it means to have a trained eye, read Steinberg, Clark, Berenson, Panofsky, even Baxandall, or Fried (not just Bois whom I often use as a mononymic stand-in to refer to the easiest-pointable material exemplum of the kind of eye I mean), and you'll find they're all in touch with the same

thing, that they may be speaking different languages but that there are paintings that they would all (wordlessly or nearly so) agree are great.
As early as my second course with Prof. Lugli, I recall a paper in which I'd chosen to write about Thiebaud and found myself somewhat lyrical with enthusiasm about his iridescent Albers-halos, already I was being cautioned from slipping into what I think he saw in me as an unconscious pantomime of habitual praise I'd internalized from the canon-builders, perhaps an echo I'd taken for my own opinion. But it was my own opinion, and no pantomime. I loved those paintings and I meant what I said.
As early as my first course with Prof. Lugli, my first art class tout court (concurrent though it was with Maxmin's and Meyer's), I had already found a way to reliably get a painting into words: Take a passive stance with respect to my own gaze, and then simply describe what happens. It's the easiest thing because, once you let go of the reins and let your eyes move around, then, for the first time, the things happening happen in sequence; there is first one, and then another. That's what allows you to write first one thing, and then another, and then you have written about the painting, after you've done what you can ferreting out all the passive objective-correlatives which were the rocks at the bottom of (determining the course of) the stream that was your looking.
Incidentally, I had thereby, in finding a way to write, learned what was actually the most pivotal skill of all: this is the starting point for any training of the eye: the extraordinarily simple step of looking at your looking, the step that I called above letting go of the reins, the step of letting perception happen and then considering is character, its qualia. This is the fundamental act of "aestheticization," the atomic step in which the perception of art (really the perception as art) inheres. For paintings, it always involves some relaxation of the muscles around the eye and maybe in the spinal column; I wonder if this is what Bonnard (it was his phrase, wasn't it? Could it have been Hantaï?) meant when he said "regard (or was it œil?) flottant."

19 March 2025

Doing things in the studio today. (I can obviously say this every day because my studio is a studio and my studio is a studio, but today it's newly true.) I'd even say that I'm painting. I haven't opened a tube or wetted a brush, but, quant à moi, I'm painting.

As the light began to drain out of the room like water from cloth, I cut the reproductions (at a scale I'd guess at 1:4) of the Book of Kells. I sorted them in some order which has to do with my values of harmony and active balance.

At about 1:30 p.m. I called Danny in the gym in which I've begun lifting dumbbells but which I

consider in my head to be a yoga room because I believe I am getting out of this lifting of weights what most people do when they do yoga, and then, after getting off the phone with him, lightly burned myself in what was left of the sun on the roof, while indulging certain “art writing” (scratching painter-admiration itches: Englander, Papademetropoulos, Treib, Grotjahn--see next note) and then talking with my father.

From waking until 1:30 p.m., I was doing things that, I say, I consider to be painting. I was, basically, putting the mess of notes and sketches and ideas and printed reproductions (ideas, things with mists that I wanted to let to percolate, things with spores and sprouts that I wanted to let to propagate) into places where they can bear fruit anew. There is now, between the unfinished painting on the wall and the window, a makeshift shelf on which there are two or three stacks of things I am actively using, right now--things which are immediately informing paintings. There is now, in the bottom drawer of the filing cabinet, into which I separated out the things in the top drawer which were not “ephemera” (all the things from my life that I keep) but were rather sketches and things, which I thought, once, ought to just get in line with all the other things. But now those, and many things that had been on the floor, are in the bottom drawer, divided by a piece of cardboard I made, divided into “outside” (things whose mists I no longer want to percolate) and “inside” (things which I will turn to when I need something).

Treib

Englander

Grotjahn?

In the last of the day’s light I opened my big book, Art Treasures of the Louvre, maybe my best book for reproductions, the kind they used to do where each picture is on its own perfectly rectilinear leaf, lightly pasted onto a page. It is new to me; I found it that day, the best day at the book box for its fructiveness, the day Arty Nelson walked his dogs by me, saying on the phone that he had first seen this artist’s work at a group show at Clearing, and I knew immediately that he was talking about Eric McHenry (whose exhibition’s opening at One Trick Pony I had already been planning to attend) and Wellspring (which I had reviewed, at length, with personality, but could not find a place to publish the too-many words I’d written).

All this to say: Venus and the Goddess of the Waters offers at least two trobata, but they’re somewhat glancing.

The first is in the title. The goddess of the waters: Who is that? No Greek name comes immediately to mind. And so it's perfect, like Pound's invocation which, as far as I remember, is to "O God of the waters," and includes "purifiez nos cœurs" intricately repeated, and, perhaps, the fragment "... and the beauty of this thy Venice."

The second: To intend to paint something which would bring to one's mind the words "the subject, probably inspired by an elaborate mythological poem, is difficult to identify with any certainty," as did this painting.

More ink (spilled for this painting) that, abstracted away from any painting, can germinate new images and arrangements in my mind: "The stilted essay in elegant gesture, the elongated silhouettes, the delicate metallic colors … . … a decorative precision in the painting of the flowers reminiscent of medieval illuminations; a fragile grace about the bodies; and a certain naïveté in the composition …"

Vermeer's Lacemaker's work could be removed from its context and made to read as the spilling of the two vital ichors across velvet.

Still from the Louvre book, more words that I'd like to find a way to engender, but do not feel I can do so by alike means to van Eyck's own--so, the question is, how?

"The bottle glass of the windows seems as precious as the jewels of the crown, and even the small garden and its flowers, the town, and the mountains have something of this clear, jewel-like character. / Through balance and rhythm, through geometrically precise perspective and clear spatial intervals, Van Eyck imposes on reality an intellectual discipline which is no less ordered than that of Italian art." (Forgive the broaching, at the end, of the violence I've named Vasarianism.)

That German late-1400s Eve called “a masterpiece of shy grace, sweetness, and naïveté”:

This Saint Martin and the Beggar by Fouquet, and the Angelico Coronation that sticks out in my mind as the biggest surprise from my own visit to the Louvre, are the best examples of taut balance from the book, to my eyes at present.

(Forgive the colors; night has fully fallen.)

Exempla of this particular virtue are not easily come by. It is the highest pleasure in the game of hero-worship, to have them from hands so dripping with--with what?--not just fama, not just étrangeté, but that golden thing which has for me always been somewhere between and above those two.

This Pietà from before 1400, attributed without certainty to Malouel, comes endowed with adjectives I’d like to make newly mine (they have been mine, in certain ways, and I need to come to inhabit them as beauty itself): “... the harmonious simplicity of the composition, blanched if somewhat stilted, the tender calm of the faces, the graceful purity of the drawing of Christ’s body, and the beauty of the long, elegant hands.” (Emphasis mine.) The color (even that of the reproduction) comes through not at all in the photo, but neither Wikipedia nor the Louvre’s

website do much better.

With the passage (interwoven of threads trading smaller passages, but “passage” (first instance, above) here is broader in scope) which ends (I only say it ends because I have to come up for breath to make a declaration; of course nothing ends and there are eight and a half hundred pages to go) on the top of page 42 of Roberto Bolaño’s "2666," I come to realize I am reading a work of utter gorgeousness. I’d transcribe every word of the preceding half dozen pages if I weren’t chronically and fundamentally weak, tired, and insufficient. I think instead to watch "Borsalino," one of dozens of movies on a list I’ve made which I check again and again and again and again feel “not up to,” but now, I think, watching it, attaching it to this book to which I do less injustice by pausing than I would by continuing, I will be able to be bowled over by everything that I will love in it. I expect restraint, negation, feinting, unspoken ecstatic beauty floating upon or woven within (but in any case invisible to direct looking) a by-no-means-spare objective-correlative (by which I mean the “plot”: a gangster movie plot serving in 1970, as it does now, the same role, that of a vessel, which the ongoingly-unfolding (this is just a guess) “love square” (the term is vulgar in its excess of bluntness but I cannot say what it really is) plays at this stage in "2666." I was leafing through my mental representation of my list of movies as I read, prompted not by a while-reading desire to watch a movie but rather by the thought that many of Bolaño’s descriptive moments seem more like direct descriptions of moments (not shots—briefer—on the order of 0.5 to 10 seconds) from a certain kind of film (but what kind?) than things that typically occur to a writer to say by way of narration. This thought, in turn, prompted a more focused consideration of the question, “what kind?,” or, what is the movie that bears, on however abstract a plane, the deepest correspondence to this book, or, maybe this is all I can really ask, to what it is I am loving in this book. I hovered for a moment between “Le cercle rouge” and “Borsalino,” then settled on the latter with a sense not quite of certainty but at least of finality. Then, in making sure that it was logistically possible to watch this movie on my laptop, I read that it was based on two real gangsters who, though this goes unmentioned in the film, were Nazi collaborators. I paid no particular attention to this fact until, on page 39, the absent central figure of "2666," the vanished author Benno von Archimboldi, is said to have in common with his now-

established double-in-the-negative Swabian foil that they were “both young men in the years of terror and barbarism under Hitler, both World War II veterans, both writers, both citizens of a bankrupt nation, both poor bastards adrift at the moment when they meet and (in their grotesque fashion) recognize each other …”: And thus I proceed into my exquisitely primed filmic experience. I ask this as an aside but it as at once utterly germane and entirely unrelated: Why am I at once thrilled, elated even, and also awash in dissatisfaction with my life, feeling not only that it is not enough but, maybe even worse, that it is the wrong one? The thing is that the Apollonian discipline that Delon-Melville invoked to call down upon "his" person (and upon "Le Samouraï" too) the unsurpassable beauty of perfection in restraint—bushidō, the final shot—is too cold and too hard to live in, of course. That doesn’t do anything to that film’s perfection, except to establish that it’s also possible to pull on a completely other set of emotions, such as those played by the choreographed comedy of the first meeting in Borsalino, the fight around the pool table, and show that there is a friendship of a kind that you and I know, and that that friendship, too, can be transfigured into beauty itself. That is what Belmondo and Delon are doing, what I love. It wasn't a very good movie though.

20 March 2025

I have become extraordinarily excited and hopeful about the idea of working at Lazy Acres. “You don’t know anything about that” said Bella. But what if I can know.

I am very proud of this letter I wrote them. Lazy Acres

21 March 2025

On Victor Boullet & Brian Kennon at Castle, before having seen their show And (it’s Boullet’s painting “cluster” therein that is titled Stupid Pope):

What initially caught my eye with the exhibition was a stray word noted by Boullet that the gallery repeated. It rang true to me, to the particular unexpectable strange-shaped thoughts that go through my head when I try to paint. “Today I am looking at [the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II] as subject matter, or a wishful in. By in, I simply mean a possibility to continue as a painter. I see myself as a spectator snorkeling on the inside of this spectacle, but sucking air from the outside in order to survive as a painter.”

A thought like this is foreign to most people I’d try to explain it to. Why not just paint? Why does it have to be so hard? The same goes for most of the thoughts that hyperdetermine the shape of exhibitions by artists such as Merlin Carpenter and Eric Schmid, with whom Boullet has worked in the recent past. Why contort paintings around such armatures as “Homotopy Type Theory”?

There is an answer, of course. An urgent need felt by these artists. And the disconnect felt by the skeptics who ask “why” has a simple explanation. They’re forgetting that the compulsion is not just to paint but to paint well. For a painter, there is no use making this distinction because to paint without painting well--lie about this though we might--is an unthinkable thought. We can tell ourselves that we’ve foresworn all notions of “good” and “bad,” that we’re even trying to make “bad paintings” for this reason or that, but really, if we say this, we’re pulling a (maybe-important, maybe-good, maybe-conscious, maybe-not) sleight of hand whereby the goalpost has not been abolished, just shifted while you (and, maybe necessarily, we) are not looking.

If you have a fresh impression of the impossible weight of how hard it is to make good paintings, then it’s no wonder why Boullet and Kennon might come off as a bit cantankerous, even unnecessarily opaque, when it’s demanded on behalf of Kennon, “you’ll need to read between the lines. But you’ll need to write those lines first, because he won’t.”

Or, for that matter, when Boullet explains, with painful precision, “What unfolded on St Peter’s Square, I choose to see as an aesthetic created by Mr Ağca’s ethics. A chaotic, very visual, mass movement of people that lasted a few seconds, and captured by photography. All this is understandable, but what about the days leading up to 13th May, 1981. That is the time where his ethics were mulled over and developed into the action that became the aesthetic that was documented. But the days prior to this tragic event are not captured on camera, so those days must contain a dormant, or a hidden aesthetic. This is bothering me, and will my annoying thought about this clandestine aesthetic at some point create visual debris, or matter that can become an odds-on in?”

I know exactly what he means.

Whenever I write what I am going to write about Elizabeth Englander I need to attach the below note from 6 February 2024.

Actually all I was going to write is that what I always try to invent by means of those “little guy” s on the Sugarcubes album covers, and have recently almost actualized with my will-work but hasn’t-yet idea with Guilbeault’s figures and Bella’s pattern, is so far no closer to where it will get than are Englander’s yoginis. That is, upon seeing these yoginis, and reading her perfect writing about them, I see that I am not yet any closer to where I am going with these little guys (let alone getting them into my paintings) than I would be if I were literally her.

Her text:

"To study the buddha way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be actualized by myriad things. When actualized by myriad things, your body and mind as well as the bodies and minds of others drop away.

-Dōgen, "Genjōkōan"

I start my Yoginis by gathering scraps and piling them on small stools. Eventually, I lay them out on the floor, designating the key bodily nodes. Like embryonic stem cells, elements differentiate into the limbs, joints, and organs of the growing figure.

The scraps are pieces of wooden toys, furniture, and German-style, figurative nutcrackers made in China. At once handpainted, ancestral totems and symbols of excess consumption, dolls and creepy old men, nutcrackers like these are ubiquitous in the U.S. I have dismembered my family's collection and others sourced from craigslist.

Using wooden dowels to connect the fragments, I construct seated figures based on poses from Asian sacred art. The Yoginis in my 2022 show Eminem Buddhism were based on images of ferocious Hindu goddesses: icons of Chamunda, the yoginis, and Shaivite saint Karaikkal Ammaiyar. In the yogini temples of medieval India, dozens of icons with aged and youthful bodies represent the multifaceted nature of Shakti, the great goddess who personifies energy in all its

Inspired by the cumulative effect of this proliferation, I continued producing Yoginis.

Around no. 20, I started meditating at a Zen center, driven by a mix of curiosity and need. This new experience is reflected in the orthoprax meditation poses of several of the new figures. Yogini no. 26 sits in full lotus with the plaid kilt of a giant nutcracker for its zafu, or meditation cushion. Its hands form the cosmic mudra. Pinocchio heads punctuate the spine like chakras. Yogini no. 25 sits in the Burmese position, its zafu a nutcracker's jeweled and feathered bearskin cap. These ceremonial hats were widely adopted by European armies in the eighteenth century, apparently because they made the soldiers seem bigger. Bright red legs and pelvis impart a solidity to the lower body: a strong foundation for meditation. The upper body is dematerialized– only the breasts hover as if on stilts. Yogini no. 27 sits in half lotus on another bearskin zafu. A Frankenstein head with a soldier's cap tops the spine.

The military elements contradict the orthoprax purity of these poses. Like me, these figures are demon devotees: blood-soaked, monstrous Even no. 26, perched primly on its tartan zafu, is delicately constructed to the point of overwrought brittleness, the impassive face undermined by a mendacious core of long-nosed, grinning Pinocchio heads.

Several other new Yoginis sit in royal ease, a pose associated with the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara in their Chinese manifestation as Guanyin. In Yogini no. 30, one leg hangs freely, while the other leg is bent, an elbow resting upon the knee. The other arm is planted on the seat, supporting a relaxed torso. The breasts are bunches of wooden grapes; an Uncle Sam

top hat locates the head. Originally male, Guanyin can assume any form to guide a given individual to enlightenment; in some manifestations they thus appear as a woman or indeed as a female prostitute. While feminized depictions of Guanyin are usually without breasts, the grapes in no. 30 resonate viscerally with the anatomical structures of the female breast: the milk-producing lobules familiar to anyone who has performed a self-examination.

The stool in no. 30 is a taller version of a cow stool–complete with udders–that I used for Yogini no. 12. On one level a nod to the vehicles, often animals, common in Indian icons, when combined with the Uncle Sam hat it produces a string of jarring associations–American (Texan?), white, bellicose, patriarchal. Royal ease registers as relaxed dominance.

Yogini no. 23 lounges in royal ease on a tall orange stool. Its body is made from pieces of a brass-painted headboard. The breasts rise directly from the pelvis to occupy a blank space below the curve of the shoulders. Buddhist women in late imperial China used artforms including dance, adornment, and hair embroidery to connect with the feminized bodhisattva of compassion. Drawing the deity was a form of devotion in itself and a way of making Discussing a drawing by Fang Weiyi, a Qing Dynasty artist and devout widow, Yuhang Li explains that while the "delineation of the figure represents Guanyin's meditative body… the interior void of the figure signifies the state of

In its clunky-elegant way, no. 23 also tries to delineate the void of the meditator's mind using Guanyin's emptied form. I suppose I too am trying to make merit, since I certainly can't empty my own mind. There is a seventeenth century Japanese monk named Enku who is renowned for having made 120,000 Buddhas. It is said that to accomplish this feat of merit he made ten Buddhas per day! He also walked all over Japan. For a while I convinced myself that he would therefore have had no time to meditate, using this presumption to excuse my lack of resolve. After a few months I found I really needed to sit. Humbled, I have returned to practice.

Looking at the Yoginis as a group, there is a continuum between the fragmentary or simplified and the complete or elaborate. Nowhere is this more obvious than in Yogini no. 17 and no. 18. First I made no. 17, the more complete one. Having an identical chair, in no. 18I recreated an earlier, simpler stage. Some of Enku's buddhas, the koppa-butsu or "chip buddhas" are "practically sticks with a On the other hand, the tenth-century Seiryōji Buddha, brought from China to Japan, has a cavity containing a full set of inner organs made of To me, both approaches are compelling: the minimalist approach, where "body and mind drop away," and the completist approach, which honors the complexity of embodied experience.

Composed of recognizably disparate elements, these figures are in a literal sense "actualized by myriad things." Pieces like the wooden grapes simultaneously read as body parts and maintain their identities as fragments, embodying the non-duality of the mundane and transmundane. If the nutcrackers I use are devalued kitsch, they are also loci of myriad relationships between beings: made of the body parts of trees, they are hand-painted by factory workers. Destined for late capitalist festive life, they quickly become charged ancestral heirlooms. I like to imagine that by dismembering them, I free them from some of this karma. Refashioned into spacious, divine bodies, the resulting personal icons are indices of my dialog with the dharma."

Here is my 6 Feb 2024 note:

“Richard Lindner’s “Boy with Machine” comes back to me with as much force as it has always had, specifically its force qua avatar of a time, archetype or allegorical protagonist for a spatiotemporal locus or group of people exposed to a set of conditions or … I’m failing to recollect what terms I’ve used for this, whether homunculus or simply “type,” but in any case, here he is again, a mascot for Deleuze--Deleuze has a mascot (Already I commit heresy!). “But on this pass what is more interesting to me is an angle that D-G provides through / adjacent to him. An opening toward that toward which I always seek openings: Infancy, development (childhood, embryonic), with “epigenesis” and all the other disjoint notions and paradigms that are and will be so fertile in painting but which I have yet to even begin to plot into an account in my head. It is this: “A painting by Richard Lindner, "Boy with Machine," shows a huge, pudgy, bloated boy working one of his little desiring-machines, after having hooked it up to a vast technical social machine—which, as we shall see, is what even the very young child does” (7). “What even the very young child does”: That is the zone which interests me more than almost any other, and at least as much as any other: And here D-G pronounce their view of it: Working desiring-machines, after hooking them up to a vast technical social machine. Taking that for what I will.”

25 March 2025

I cried last night and tonight. Last night I could not stand it anymore how Bella wouldn’t tell me what she was so mad about when she couldn’t help from showing it on a regular basis. I kept asking questions until she told me what it was. She said my reasons for not wanting various jobs add up to an unwillingness to take any job. But this isn’t true at all. I explained to her again and again that all my reasons are neither unreasonable nor nonnegotiable nor arbitrary. Above all I just want free mornings, I said, so I can paint, and then it became clear she doesn’t believe I want to paint. Then I cried, and eventually I asked how she loves me if she doesn’t believe in the one thing I care about. At one point she said I wouldn’t spend all my time walking if I really cared about my time. I could hardly get the words out, but I had to, because I tell her in different ways again and again and she does not understand: I have no friends here, so I need to walk instead, and when I cannot, all the force of my desire to leave turns into forceful wanting to die. But even again, tonight, I had to explain to Bella that there is not another month’s rent in my bank account, that I have paid the very last one, when she seemed to find it ridiculous that I was taking a $7 online course to receive a food handling certificate valid in the state of California. For some reason it is destroying me how she does not understand my situation and continues not to understand it. I alternate slowly, from morning to night to morning, between ashamed anger and comfortable forgiveness and a desire to be alone for long, all these giving way to a forceful

impulse to go away.
Tonight I cried because I have received the second interview offer of this whole time spent looking for jobs. The first one was offered from the bagel store and they were unreachable when I called four times and emailed trying to accept the interview. My interview tomorrow is at Whole Foods, for part time work in the bakery section of their West Hollywood location. I cried when I thought of calling my parents to tell them I got the job. I cried almost one year ago when Bella received her phone call that let her know she had gotten the job she has now. I had to step onto our balcony to give her privacy, and it was not a job I thought was good at the time, but I cried the most piercing tears of love-pity or joy or whatever it was, when I saw the smile on her face through the glass. I cried tonight when I imagined calling my parents. I cried in imagination of telling them because I felt so strongly the onset of the tears that, I suppose, would set on if I called them to tell them that. This crying would be different.

26 March 2025

I've become very interested in the work of Elizabeth Englander lately, most of all her nutcracker yoginis. If that interested is not documented above it is because I have been using other documents--a "trobata stream" split across a series of documents (for image quantity), and another for "register sorting"--and maybe it only got written there.

I am taking her yoginis for one of the central pieces of scaffolding--the others being the Sugarcubes guys ("guys" here agender), Guilbeault's stimuli, and maybe Ren & Stimpy and some other things--alongside which I am to construct my "little guys" who will play, most likely, some sort of friezelike role in my paintings, like ticker tape or barcodes printed in rows or columns (whatever the tensile harmony requires) scanning space with their charge of eros--whether struggle or the exterior reality (Sacrament) of interpersonal communion, either way unto ecstasy.

And toward this end I am just adding a couple of notes. These two come from an Avenue Magazine interview:
This one shows a structure of thinking that explains, in part, and retroactively, why her yoginis convene for the purpose of my "guys." I never think about this class, but maybe my drawing in Stanford's med school's cadaver basement was important after all. '"There is something gruesome about taking nutcrackers apart, but it's exactly how the figure was taught in art history," Englander says. "In Paris in the 19th century, art schools had a relationship with medical schools and there was a lot of dissection that went on. Sometimes, in order to understand something, we need to take it apart."'
This one gave me brief pause. What about the luminous beauty that Mallarmé's "Coup de dés" and "Cantique de Saint-Jean" (and Moreau besides) spin from "Western" beheading? It's as though she's closed off to this. But still, at bottom, our projects are in common; it's just that I am deeply connected to a tradition that (she says) never really resonated with her, and I'm bent on

turning it inside out as did Michelangelo and Dante. “Englander's Yogini no. 10, for example, is based on the deity Chamunda, a form of Shakti that is a demon slayer (a metaphor for the slaying of personal demons) and wears a skulled garland. / In Englander's sculpture, nearly 20 nutcracker heads drape like a rope down the front of the figure, which is adorned with two red hats from Santa nutcrackers. In this work, the nutcrackers take the place of Chamunda's skulls. / "These works have shifted my perspective," Englander says. "Dismemberment is violent, and in the past, I worked with it as a negative metaphor and constant in the history of Western sculpture. But it's also an important motif in Indian art. In Buddhist and Tantric iconography, decapitation can signify liberation because you've cut off your delusions. Working on these pieces revealed the positive aspect of decapitation as a metaphor for liberation."”
Wow! At the end of this quote I find we really are talking about the same thing. But where I’ve used the vocable “Love and caffeine and lust (in German),” she uses “Shakti.” “"T've used the yogini structure as a way to explore iconographies of various deities along with meditation poses, building a kind of spiritual body language vocabulary-slash-reper-toire," she says. "Normally, I wouldn't stay this long on a single form or theme. There's a logic to the yoginis, where the more you can explain how the different iterations of Shakti pervade every-thing, the more you get a sense of Shakti, which is essentially energy."”

27 March 2025

I met several great people yesterday.

Kelly interviewed me at Whole Foods in West Hollywood. She seemed perhaps a bit by-the-book, but very nice, normal, and experienced.

Vanessa at Overduin--very nice--said Maggie Friedman was the underdog of the show, and it was surprising that she was the only artist I knew beforehand. We agreed that her work was very compelling for the centering of translation itself and, as I said while leaving, how the green-limiting makes it stick in the memory. But I thought about her work again this morning and the thought of it felt a bit empty. Would it be enough, I mean, if she weren’t writing novels too? Novels I haven’t read, of course, and I liked the paintings anyway, but I did know about the novels. But then it was just a group show, and I missed her solo at As It Stands, so it’s certainly too early to say.

Lukas Hendriks was a sophomore from USC film school who showed up trying to see Michelle Uckotter part 2 (with Cameron) at Marc Selwyn on Camden in Beverly Hills. He interned with François Ghebaly last summer, a role which he needed his web design experience to get, and wants to be at a gallery again this summer, but it’s hard. We both had Issy Wood at Michael Werner as our next stop. I liked his vibe.

The phone number I reached for Selwyn, which the sign on the door said to call, was a woman’s voice who said Alexander would be over to let us in. He said he wished he knew more about art, but he’s just the door guy. Still not a bad gig, if you can get it, I said. He was talking to Ramsey Alderson and some other people in the store that fronts the Michael Werner space when I was leaving there an hour and a half later.

I'd spent all that time talking to Francisco, and (slightly less, because she was busy) to Bella; they were the "Gallery Assistants" at Michael Werner, and when they walked into the empty galleries which Lukas and I had just entered, I can't remember why but I had cause to say I'm a painter and intermittent review writer. This made them light up, because they had just had their staff meeting turn into an impromptu hour-plus conversation about why there are no--or no good--or not more good--art critics in L.A. That's why I then talked to them for more than an hour, about everything, and it was great.

I said the main reason, in my opinion, is the geographic dispersion of galleries, which makes it impossible, even with a full day and a schedule as fortunate as possible, to see more than four or five worthwhile shows at a time. This hadn't come up in their conversation, but they acknowledged it was a factor, citing the fact that it was only out of the salon that art criticism came to be in the first place. Well, there's Artillery, I said. This got a big laugh of agreement: Yes, there's Artillery. And "our diva" (Francisco's words) was fun to pay attention to, but hasn't written any opinionated reviews in months, preferring to waste time with Instagram polls. I offered that they might be overcautious like this because of Manhattan Art Review's opinion that they lack an actual critical sensibility of their own--the timing lines up. My main last word on the matter was that it's very hard, really, to write good art criticism, to have a self-consistent and passionately defensible position, even aside from the near-impossibility of getting an opinion published if it's not just a paraphrased (and even shortened) press release. But we agreed to read each other's writing, he asking for my website's address, I begging for any comments negative and useful, he saying "we'll see when I write it tonight" when I asked him what he's going to write about the just-closed Ramsey Alderson show at Tiffany's Door that he said he has been given the opportunity to review, and now must, because the other possibility he was going to use the opportunity for was a play he ended up not going to.

I can hardly write all the details I learned, but I want to.

Francisco and Bella explained to me how we got to here, how readings have replaced (in terms of many of the dimensions of their functionality) openings, how it was all back to Jasmine Johnson's "Factory Made" (was that the title?), and how now you have to show up an hour late to miss as much as possible of the actual reading, which is uniformly terrible. But all you have to do, in order to stay in touch with everyone, is to continuously go to everything. But what? Throughout the hour, I accumulated a whole list from them: Just in the immediate future, there is a writers and publishers conference bringing every single writer to Los Angeles, there is Dennis Cooper, there is 220 archive every night, there is Milkweed Friday night, Night boat party and reading series, and Conrad Fisher Saturday.

More than once, Francisco seemed not quite to romanticize, but really to elevate, in rose-lens-free terms, as the only genuinely viable option after long and rigorous consideration, the idea of working as a "barista." Only thereby can one survive as an artist, and not abandon their art-making, as he and so many others have. Only thereby can one maintain the interminable continuation, even when Eagle Rock gets flooded with 21-year-old artists (as it did in 2019 or 2020--seriously, he said, at that time it seemed like everyone I met was a 21-year-old artist), even when the Melrose Hill wave crests and arrives and is what it is and brings with it too much New York and not enough real collectors and not enough sustaining artist jobs, even when careers stall out at Night Gallery, or when artist studios like the Vito Schnabel one which employs his friend can no longer have wifi because the work isn't selling, even when it is just too easy for all the rich boys in Highland Park to continue to be "artists" without jobs.

Stray details: One Trick Pony is “the swag bro gallery”; Francisco condensed everything it is into Modelo, and I added Acne Studios to complete the image. Michael Bala is “the best kind of sculptor bro,” the only good kind, whose work really is a cresting wave of embodied aesthesis in space when you finally get it like that as I did at Clearing last summer, but who is also at the same time canny enough to wink at this fact, and to get that wink to register in his work. And besides, Francisco loves the way he dresses, loves the square-toed loafers and the hats; he’s a dandy, really, Francisco seemed to realize, saying it loud and with excitement; why can’t there be more dandies, why does everyone have to dress like Billie Eilish?

Francisco was somewhat down on the “Gallery Assistant” title, which he has held unchanged even though his responsibilities are now quite expansive and varied. It’s been the same since, years ago, before its space’s facelift, he was at Clearing (until the director he was assisting left, and the replacement didn’t want him, or something). Trying to offer a bright side, I asked, isn’t there at least a whole new set of people you get to meet, and become closer to, at Werner? I was surprised to hear his answer, that, really, even here, he hasn’t really met anyone that you wouldn’t meet, and indeed that he had already met, on the top floor of the Gaylord Apartments. Ramsey, I was very surprised to find, seems to be a director or something at Werner. He is in danger of becoming the sort of artist who, after insistently persevering in not caving to salable taste throughout the beginning of his productive career, ends up 40 and--“not Ghettoized; what’s a WWII-connotation-free word for the same?” Francisco said; I offered “backwatered”--the current flows on, and that is how all the good work ends up left behind. This is why Francisco should use his words on these paintings.

Francisco asked me, right off the bat, and smiling, whether I was going to review Wet Reckless. I deflected, because, in a world where only positive (or ambiguous at worst) reviews can be written, one must exercise enormous discipline in the then-all-weighty matter of selecting what to review. I’ve been more interested by the idea of interviewing artists lately, I said, not really indicating that I’d like to interview Issy Wood, but Francisco said she only agreed to enter into conversation with Naomi Fry that recent evening and (separately?) for the exhibition’s catalogue because she was completely in control with this close friend of hers. She is in magnificent, air-tight, hermetically frigid control of her own image. We agreed that this is a separate game entirely from that of making compelling art, and that it was, on its own terms, thrilling to see it played magisterially. But that is how she got to the top of the cheerleader pyramid (Francisco’s really great metaphor) of what is, fundamentally, a painting practice born on Tumblr, the tender and care-dripping curation-materialization of “significant images.” Francisco said that on the Werner roster there are two artists, one boy, one girl, both hot, both possessed of this specific generational sensibility. Kantarovsky? I guessed; No, Krewer, he said; Kantarovsky holds down the 40s-year-old camp, while Krewer and Wood are 32.

“Significant images”: Not inherently a word-limitation of the work: I insisted it can be gorgeous when it’s done well, as here, with the texture of the stitched-together velvet, the blunt impact in this low-ceilinged space, and Francisco agreed, pointing out the handily-executed variations of scale. I tried to think of other ways that sensibility has been spun into real beauty. I tentatively offered Julien Nguyen, thinking of the digital-image-loaded online component of his 2021 Pictures of the Floating World at Matthew Marks. Yes, Francisco agreed, but the thing about Julien is also that he believes he is quite literally the greatest artist. Not just the greatest artist about now--Francisco had to make sure this got across--not even in the way that a German of the A.R. Penck generation would--like, even more than they, because without any irony, the greatest

artist ever. I smiled as wide as I could to convey that that's a bit of me, that's my shit precisely. Shouldn't we all think that? If not, why are we making anything and calling ourselves artists? Or at least, if we don't, what excuse is there for not changing what we're making? I think Francisco was won over, even though his own taste seemed to me to tend more toward the values extolled in Diva Corp's latest Artillery piece, "Less Than Zero," which, I told him, is "actually quite good."

Then I pressed, trying to figure out, without asking to know too much, whether, as I suspected from a change in the artist's online presence, "something had happened" with Julien Nguyen. Not really, Francisco said, but he has changed the way he is; I don't know what to say because I don't know how much you know about his personal life; I said that I really don't want to know more than I should; No artist can be that hot (market-wise, I gathered)--and he was as hot as it gets--without some (I forget the word he used, but I'd say) hangover.

You know, he used to hang out with "the gays" (he kept calling them this, or "the Gaylord gays," but the briefer version made me smile, because isn't everyone around (gay)? Does he guess that I am, too, I wonder, in light of a comment noted shortly below?). Also, he used to be notorious for hanging around the UCLA dining hall and plucking out all the freshest twinks of the crop; the--what's it called--"hot bar," I said--couldn't keep them warm enough. Jake--do I know Veronica, and them? Yes, and I gather I've been around Jake, but haven't met him; Francisco said my sensibility reminds him of Jake's, and in my head and heart I hoped this meant we'd be friends, because I have admired his work so, and still admire it, ardently, as much as I can, never having seen it in the flesh. Jake was one of these, he said, is in one of Julien's paintings, if you scroll back far enough on Marks's website.

Inside I almost shivered, just at the sheer height of the Jenga tower, as I've put it, and said that it's been since high school, just about, that I've been fixated on his paintings. My adulation must have come across as such. Well, you missed your chance, Francisco smiled as I waved goodbye. Already too old, just by a hair. (And anyway he's green card married now.)

To tack onto my "paradiso terrestre / convivio,"
Eddie Martinez paintings supercharged by a Loyal Malmö catalogue I found in the GRI yesterday,

And more Eddie Martinez in a 2018 group exhibition with Rafael Delacruz (with whom he also had in common, until it closed just now, Mitchell-Innes & Nash)

And the Delacruz paintings from that show that I love, especially the titles of the first two, the first one having also received Bella's stamp of approval, withheld emphatically from any Martinez I showed her.

31 March 2025

On xiv-xv of the introduction to The Ascetic Imperative (selected by Hardy Hill to accompany his 15 Orient show), words than which there can be none closer to my vision: …the way in which a human being can become imitable…, the crux between ascesis and aesthesis.
“... a description by the pseudo-Clement in "The First Epistle Concerning Virginity" of Saint Paul as a celibate who by "treading down and subjugating the body" made of himself "a beautiful example and pattern to believers" (ch. 9: 58). An entire ideology is condensed here, involving self-denial, belief in God, and the tireless effort to starve out or punish the animal elements of the human condition.
But there is another way of looking at this figure, as a meditation on the relation between human life and aesthetic form. From this point of view the subject of the passage is the way in which a human being can become imitable, how he can meet what are sometimes called the conditions of representation. The passage implies that the body and its desires and appetites are not, as we sometimes think, the proper subject of representation, but are in fact inimical to representation. From the ascetical point of view it is self-denial that is eminently imitable.
Through discipline, the author suggests, the self becomes at once self-aware, structured, knowable, and valuable. Asceticism is not merely capable of assuming a multitude of forms; it is the form-producing agent itself. Intriguingly, the task facing "believers" who would follow the "pattern" consists of the imitation of an original model whose distinction lay in a programmatic self-abuse. Value inheres in the imitation of a man who insisted on his own worthlessness. And through this deference to a person whose life consisted of denigrating his life, one can not only conserve the past and give birth to the future, but can also anchor oneself in a community of imitation which both temporally and spatially exceeds the boundaries of the individual life.
The means of situating the self in systems that exceed the self is the production of symbolic forms. The pseudo-Clement's words remind us how intimately bound the body is to such practices of representation and imitation. Even the body-or especially the body-can participate in symbolization, can acquire and bear meaning and value. It can do so through an ascesis that appears to deny the body, or at least to oppose it, But, again, asceticism does not oppose the body in any simple way.
For by characterizing an entire life as an "imitation of Christ," or as "a pattern for believers," asceticism both denigrates and dignifies the body, casting it at once as a transgressive force always on the side of "the world" and as the scene or stage for discipline, self-denial, ascesis. Only through certain physical acts acknowledged to constitute "mastery" over the body-as opposed to the body's mastery over the self-could virtue be acquired, attested to, or proven. The pseudo-Clement characterizes the entire struggle in aesthetic terms because it is symbolic, Ascetic discipline is a bodily act that points beyond itself, expressing an intention that forms, and yet transcends and negates, the body; discipline makes the body intelligible by indicating the presence of a principle of stability and immobility within the constantly changing physical being.”
And so forth for hundreds of pages, seventy of which concern the Isenheim altar.

Ren and Stimpy stuff:
The child which opens, as a subject of a commercial, the first episode, archetypical “little guy”;
I need to find a way to make notes of “little guy”-isms--is it just screen-grabbing?--I don’t think so--I think I need to start with the documentary in order to learn more (direct source-knowledge only) of how these actual cells were drawn;
The only consistently-cited precedent, for its frequent ink-blot backgrounds, but also, I have to guess, for much more, is Bob Clampett and his Baby Bottleneck (1946), whose premise alone is enough to occupy me for months.
Jaw is dropped that likely sex criminal John Kricfalusi (R&S creator) was an inspiration to Björk (thus two of the three primary sources of the little guys intertwine around the back), who had his studio SPüMCø direct her “I Miss You” music video. The video is fantastic, everything best about his work.
A perversely erotic online spinoff involving interactive animation, “Weekend Pussy Hunt,” involved a character, Cigarette Cat, who is the subject of Weird Al’s video of “Close But No Cigar.” (JP’s selection for last night’s film club, where Phoebe and Zac very kindly accepted our desire to join, was UHF.) It’s a 2005 parody of three Cake songs--what a memory, “The Distance,” which my dad used to play for me.
Kricfalusi describes his Ren voice as a bad imitation of Peter Lorre, specifically his Maltese Falcon line “you imbecile, you bloated idiot, stupid--,” or something. His villainy there (sinister foreigner), ten years after Bela Lugosi’s Dracula (1931, 1941): Their Hungarian accent has that same thing--just one thing, really--binding it permanently and inscrutably to my monks: a soft “a” as in “apple,” interpolated into several other vowels, I think that might be the best I can describe it.

1 April 2025

More lyrical-type lines:

Heaven decided: She decided breathe it in breathe it out and again

Caelis, in caelis femelles
“Walk the line” to the tune of (and even with the chorus of) “come on (you know that I’m a fool)” somehow? Just because chorus’s “body is aching” sounds familiar and good” with esp. its drums--but I’m having a hard time hearing now what I was hearing then and am even doubting I got the right song title
“Wolfe” in the font of the credits of — of what? Weekend hunt or the weird al one or the Björk one? But in any of the cases, enough to have that happen with the font and have that R&S ep 1 little guy carried in horizontally on his back with extremely long pants trailing behind, placed semiconscious on his feet, he’s wearing a little alchemist hat and my epiphone appears in his hands and the rest happens, he’s an angel

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Add to the list of songs I would cover:

"Sunday Morning Coming Down" (Johnny Cash's version without the backing instrumentals, maybe): This and "Have You Ever Seen the Rain" I played back to back, in the wake of this past weekend, with all that that weekend meant to me (described in that "Georgia Play Notes" doc at the end), continuing on with a strange triplet of times Sunday, and finally elegized-burnt (as an offering) in my four-hour walk yesterday, so that now I feel everything with which these two songs drip, or really, that is, if every day were Sunday, because today, Tuesday, is, this I know for sure.

And "Californication": I love how they are all without shirts, bare; they remind me of a so-close model for Thomas Macie, his person and his art, and therefore for Diva Corp; I love this song's video, a document like that (L.A. Noire) upon which was based Aria Dean's Chateau Shatto show that that "anonymous critic" reviewed; and, if we're telling lies, I learned of it from the last page of Calla Henkel's first book.

I created this. I would say, smiling, to Lauren, but not out loud, that I was hoping rather for Samson.

Speaking of "things" "I" "give": I recall Jo from Stanford telling me Ingrid (not Ingmar, she confirmed she meant what she said) Bergman, and I recall Danielle Neu telling me in the New Theater Hollywood that I reminded her of Matt Dillon in Rumble Fish. Like a dog who will coat with his tongue anything with a scent reminiscent of something (something what? Something sweet, Jim Morrison would say ("Hello, I Love You"), but inexplicably, as I've never known a dog with a sweet tooth), I watch now that film).

Ren & Stimpy
Chocolate milk
Quesadilla
Sublime independent porsche service

Notes from before the talk:
“Art is what you can get away with” says Hailey; does Calla believe it? What does it mean? Why?
Ivy Pochoda in NYT on Other people’s clothes (review is admiring and then negative at the last second):
“…soon they begin to suspect that Beatrice is spying on them, using their failure to impress as fodder for her next potboiler. In response, Hailey decides to give Beatrice something spectacular to write about.”
“Henkel is at her best digging into Zoe’s quest to establish her artistic identity as well as her sexual one.”
“Henkel knows that it is when you are struggling to define yourself that you are most vulnerable to the predations of others.”

Notes from during the talk:
Bruce high quality and AIDS 3D: Are these the sculpture bros of the book? What distinguished their collective, says Calla, is that it was actually organically communal (actually collective)
What was great about Berlin scene was that it was inter generational (not striated), communicating with Strau et al too and the Cologne scene around him
Calla: Interested in the performance of their own labor since student days, so, when in Berlin and having to bartend, why not do it publicly
Have I seen these receipts / taxes photos from Times Bar period before? Portraits of artists via

their taxes in a public space
Apartment photos: Stand alongside Thomas Ruf's which are all from a place of love for his friends the residents, whereas C&M's have this squirm-inducing "tits out" aspect (Calla's phrase, the art critic's dvd, "your friends pimping themselves out for Airbnb")
Karl holmqvist - Gaylord?
Fassbinder 24 hours don't make a day - made for TV movie that their bar movie is based on?
New Theater Hollywood has a film over these couple of years happening in the background, starring a filmmaker, Lila (?)

Notes from after the talk:
Gracie said to me “we’re going to Edendale after” while walking out the door after I said I knew her name from her writing I admire, and was happily surprised when I found she was presenting the talk
August was the only person recognizable from the talk at the bar; I got to order a drink with him, Max, and Satchel and start talking to them outside
Max - like Jack O’Neil, from San Diego, very intelligent, friends-ish with Martignano
Satchel (sp.?) - looks Croatian, has finger tattoos, from Maine
Martiniano (sp.? - Argentinian, Martignano?) - Disapproved of the talk more than the work, did not like the way they were packaging the practice (which, at its core, he acknowledged, was good) for this setting, identifying (and misidentifying--the Fassbinder made-for-TV film Eight Hours Does Not Make a Day was miscited with twenty-four replacing eight in the title and then, I think, Gracie corrected them). His opinion was acute because he did performance art, very similar work, under the name Los Super Elegantes, for twelve years, with Milena (?), after which he has spent sixteen years in fashion, starting with shoes (because of Argentinian tradition of horseback riding, espadrilles, polo, etc.) and then moving into everything else.
Eli joined us, talked about heroin and opiates with Martiniano, I thought he must be joking because of how he looked but seemed serious. Editor of Los Angeles Review of Books’s new arts section, invited me to pitch and gave me his email. Went to Stanford in the last year-ish to consult archives there, where are housed the papers of the obscure art critic John Fitzgibbon (?) who in the 1970s made tableaux vivants inspired by Gauguin paintings etc. using seminaked students etc., like Pasolini’s Decameron (my reference, onto which Eli and Martignano piled on with enthusiasm--Canterbury Tales and Arabian Nights too--lucky, because I’ve never seen any of these three in full). I was able to reveal more of myself & my criticism outlook & even my painting practice to him than I have been able to to anyone else, ever, because of how he invited it out of me. Prompted by the arrival of Sid (sp.?), and the mention of Sanya (upon my “Sanya the painter?,” Eli said yes, Sid did 3D animation stuff with him mostly in 2014 but off and on for years afterward, and I said “the monkey?,” and I connected my interest in it to my interest in Ren & Stimpy, I said many things in between & among these things framing them all in what I really think were natural and interesting ways, eventually I mentioned the upcoming Regen show with a painter who has cited Ren & Stimpy, and it just might be (smiling exchange was had on the subject) that this will be the first pitch of mine that he receives. I think, also, that he--or he and Martiniano--knew the name Emanuele Lugli.
I met, glancingly, “Sid” and, separately, at the Calla and Max and Gracie table, “Mess,” and there was also there a musician in David Foster Wallace glasses.

Gracie talked generously to me about many things: Her Catholic boarding school in Monterey that she liked (she was not a boarder), her exhaustion with art criticism in Los Angeles after eight years of it (there is not, in fact, ever any pay in it, and this is not a hill she's willing to continue to die on), how she got going with it (mostly cold pitches, really, but also meeting people--she had mentioned that it was, in fact, through these ArtCenter talks that she first started meeting people here), Stanford and San Jose (where she is from) and the Le Creuset sale and Bella's love of cooking and Bella's work (Gracie asked about both of these things and I was happy to answer), her excitement to move to New York and be "the L.A. girl" there (the only one, really, in the NYU MFA program, into which she got a very good deal, and where she will effectively be paid to write her novel, which is about Los Angeles).

3 April 2025

I ought to draw the "Newt Heater Hollywood"

Lyric lines:

Chanel Beads "Idea June" (and "Idea June Video" but closer to me and my visions in the former) (This nearly made me cry because of my recent things occupying my mind, fracturing my life, unquestionably inexpressible for more than a month now):
"I wanna be with you
I want to see if it's true
I want to lie down next to you
They don't see it but they see you" (emphasis mine) (the three preceding lines situate it, I guess, but I don't mean what they say so bluntly)

Bar Italia "Missus Morality": "I don't care if you think I'm lonely" reminds me of the way I said to Georgia (and Horacio and Anthony and whoever else could hear our end of the table at Shaun's house, maybe even Shaun), "I go up into the clouds above my room" in lieu of having friends

4 April 2025

Having to close tabs.

ATLA gallery:
Cultured interview https://www.culturedmag.com/article/2025/04/02/atla-gallery-los-angeles-jenny-blumenfield-ryu-takahashi
Tanaka (current) https://www.atla.works/mai
Nick Lenker (upcoming in a duo) https://www.nicklenker.com/
Yuka Mori - upcoming I think? - gorgeous Baconesque scenarios but in scroll painting format and coming off closer to Beaufils https://lokogallery.com/en/archives/artists/yuka-mori

Gracie Hadland things to read:
Eric Wesley Timeshare https://artreview.com/eric-wesley-turning-tables-timeshare-los-angeles-review-gracie-hadland/
Larry Johnson & Asha Shechter at Jenny's https://www.frieze.com/article/coded-languages-artists-larry-johnson-and-asha-schechter
Tishan Hsu https://drive.google.com/file/d/1miUfs3y-x8CJEc1LRM4Xwj4WJHfXnmC0/view
Spike Gaga Reena LA https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IlDS22eIHBTYgKcKaIAb-BukZZwSjqtB/view
Natasha Stagg https://lareviewofbooks.org/blog/reviews/curse-contemporary/

Eli: John Fitz Gibbon record
https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c8b281fk/

Ren & Stimpy, vague material:

Animation breakdown https://cartoonresearch.com/index.php/animation-breakdown-for-sven-hoek-1992/

Stimpy's invention good ep https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stimpy%27s_Invention

Another blog post https://creatorsincubator.wordpress.com/2010/01/28/ren-and-stimpy-john-kricfalusi-and-the-art-of-creativity/

Then there's the documentary

Another great Vermeer document: A spatial analysis of his signatures
https://www.essentialvermeer.com/references/signatures.html

(I'd like to think of that as another tool in the box of Peter Burnhill's Type Spaces: In-house norms of Aldus Manutius. A scaffold, an armature, for the work, playing the role for me that the premise of photographing bar aftermath & receipts played for Calla and Max: It's just the clever refraction-prism through which the real work (the fun for them, the Love for me) becomes visible.)

Lakshmi Luthra (Soldes) and Effects Journal

Patricia Treib gouaches https://effects-journal.com/archive/gouaches
https://effects-journal.com/archive/grey-eyes-hungry-for-green
https://effects-journal.com/archive/holes-in-the-art-world
"Some Notes for Making Pictures in the Twenty First Century" by Lakshmi Luthra https://effects-journal.com/archive/fetish-abc-b
"ANIMAL MIMICRY An Interview with Roger Caillois" https://effects-journal.com/archive/animal-mimicry
"The Grandiloquent Truth of Gesture" https://effects-journal.com/archive/the-grandiloquent-truth-of-gesture

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May be that the second most important reason (after Bella's own privacy) why formalism-unto-abstraction is necessary (to mediate my love-as-art operation that is fundamental) is best expressed by Pasolini. It is the reason why any point-blank enshrinement of a heterosexual Love can only come off as kitsch, since at least the 1960s. On the set of Salò:

"During the so-called 'repressive' ages sex was a joy, because it was practiced in secret, and

it made a mockery of all the obligations and duties that the repressive power imposed. Instead, in tolerant societies, as the one in which we live is declared to be, sex produces neuroses because the freedom granted is false and, above all, it is granted from above and not won from below. Therefore, the population does not live sexual freedom. Instead they adapt to freedom which is granted to them."

So I must mediate unto abstraction, as has Pasolini, as have all the rest who have made good art since then. Lest my Love, which is in fact unlike any the world has known in so long, be mistaken for a celebration of that false freedom granted from above, and thus amount pure kitsch.

My review of Rumble Fish:

I can't believe how beautiful these people are. And I love a barely-minded pretext (plot) for a film—the actors just generate sheer aura, pure vibes, nothing deeper than that, and at its very best (as here) it makes you wonder whether there even exists anything deeper than that.
Empty of any plot-force beyond a bare auratic pretext, the characters become more archetypes than personages, and are somehow even more easily projectable-onto then they would be in a movie where I was craft-deceived into feeling for them as people. So I spent much of the movie, the whole second half really, lost in thought between projections of myself into the archetypes Dillon and Rourke conjure. The death-marked Motorcycle Boy, undeniably mystical behind the undecidable question of his insanity, belonging outside of time (he would be as out of place in any other moment as he is in this one) and therefore having, as his only open possibility, to be killed; and then Rusty James with his libidinally athletic relation to all possibility, the taking of a glass of chocolate milk indistinguishable in character from the flinging-into of a more-or-less-thoughtless tryst or fight, and underneath all this the emerging notion that really, pitifully, he's incapable of thought--and all I can think is am I not, too.
I stretch myself horizontally on the roof and close my eyes to the hard sun. When I open them intermittently, the world is drained of color; my eyelids do not do enough to protect my retinae from burning to some extent, or at least wearing down, light-exhausted. The sky, then, has a metallic but razor-sharp cast. It is completely drained of color, all silver, brilliant white, or gray. Its share of clouds are so intensely detailed and yet so completely achromatic that they remind me of Rumble Fish, filmed without color long after the time of films without color, so that it has too much detail for a film without color. This has something to do with millimeters, I assume.

When Pound says:

"I have lain in Rocafixada,
level with the sunset,
Have seen the copper come down
tingeing the mountains,
I have seen the fields, pale, clear as an emerald,
Sharp peaks, high spurs, distant castles.
I have said: "The old roads have lain here.
Men have gone by such and such valleys
Where the great halls were closer together."
I have seen Foix on its rock, seen Toulouse..."

and

"I have gone in Ribeyrac
and in Sarlat,
I have climbed rickety stairs, heard talk of Croy,
Walked over En Bertan's old layout,
Have seen Narbonne, and Cahors and Chalus,
Have seen Excideuil, carefully fashioned.
I have said:
"Here such a one walked.
"Here Coeur-de-Lion was slain.
"Here was good singing.
"Here one man hastened his step.
"Here one lay panting."
I have looked south from Hautefort,
thinking of Montaignac, southward,"

I think to say the same things (different things, I mean, with the same voice & syntax) of my Los Angeles. The things to which I've attended, direct analogues to the things to which he has attended, are to be found in my recent notes.

I like it when writing is rafts of sensation.

(I've often said this is the only kind of writing for which I feel I have a trained and well-tuned knack.)

That's what I want my oscillatory work on Ludovic Nemo, particularly all its wakings-up (reconstitutions) and dissolutions (ensleepenings) in spas, to be, before anything else.

(Ok, I also like writing when it establishes a rhythm, a bassline, like Hemingway, McCarthy, and so forth; that's what propels you through a book; but that is a totally separate problematic, a craft, a conjuring, at which I may sooner or later want to try my hand, but it's a separate thing with its own terms and goals.)

Words, all words in all sentences, don't hold water. You can always see them fraying any time you look close enough. This is almost always easy to ignore, and always impossible to avoid.

Titles like "Paradise," "Harmony," "Reality," and so forth: I love them. Paradise was the docufiction video from the bar (one of the bars?) Henkel and Pitegoff ran. Reality is the name of the character in the novel by a critic whose Pitchfork review of Chanel Beads tickled me (and mentioned Ren & Stimpy).

The kind of art that people who have really plumbed "culture" (or "the arts" and "thought") to its core call out for--it's exactly what Calla and Max are producing. What I mean is art that Deleuze and Bataille would call for, and, joining their smaller voices thereunto, Tatol and Kissick, along with (in the interim holding down the fort) Barnett Newman at his most anarchist, Bois at his most clear-eyed, Buchloh (always, even when at the last second he doesn't rule out beauty): All of these want, more than anything, art that destroys the self, destruktion as the height (or the core) of art, art that tears down and makes bleed, art that works at all times to prevent too-easy identity, too-easy stability, stasis, comfort, self-assurance.

Henkel and Pitegoff do this with photography / performance / documentation just as Newman once tried to do it with painting, just as Bataille did it in flashes of writing. If any of these artists succeed, the effect is the same. Even the TLF Trio are up to the same in their music, which will be performed at the New Theater Hollywood tonight and tomorrow. In their own words: music "that fluidly shapeshifts from being an object in the room to being the room itself – just as Louise Lawler's distorted image from the Stedelijk Museum that adorns its cover." The New Theater's blurb echoes that one (which was found on the Bandcamp page for Sweet Harmony): "The ensemble produces a playful and at times solemn tone that shifts between existing as an object in a room and being the room itself."

That, what I like from Calla and Max, is, to a certain extent, altogether to one side of their too-cool-for-school game of distancing, the ever-evolving now-you-see-me act of pulling the curtain

out from under each successive fourth wall as soon as you think you've felt it out (this, incidentally, was the score on which Martiniano was calling bull; for me, his criticism was beside the point). (Of course, at bottom, this game problematizes "persona" and "performance" too, so it's not extricable completely; but even if they do ultimately compromise without saying so, by polishing themselves up at a talk like this, packaging the practice, which is what Martiniano had a problem with, it doesn't undercut what was really great about their work to begin with--the play of fiction and performance, played out through photography, happenings, video, etc.)

"My little stonefruit" Bella said to me and in the waiting room of sleep (it does not feel like an "antechamber," I am not aristocratic inside) I thought, how her rangy humor can produce these fragments that, isolated, glow, like a halo.

[On 6 April 2025 I dreamt, in the doldrums of my throat- and sinus-illness that still will not resolve, that we--Bella and I--walked, somewhat far, through blocks somewhat familiar, resembling the south side of Los Feliz Blvd. east of Commonwealth or the neighborhood southeast of Regen Projects where we walked in the evening light after Rachel Jones's opening yesterday, but not, ultimately, familiar because of these resemblances, but rather because of a resemblance to a building and its area that I had seen in a much earlier dream, apartments or houses, clearly Los Angeles, but more in common with photographs from places like the Everything Loose Will Land catalogue and other archival material with which I was familiarized in that MAK Center summer; maybe the echoed dream was that long ago, three years, a distance unusually long for a wringing-out mind like mine. We walked there, and found a building shorter, older, and less well-kept than the tallish one in the echoed dream. Somehow its environs were those of our favorite gas station, the cheap, clean, empty one, on the too-far-east stretch of Santa Monica almost due south of our apartment. Its sign, in red and white letters over black, matching the not-quite-right finishings of the building itself, read "Stonefruit Apartments," and it was an understood fact that Phoebe had lived there. When I woke up this morning, I had no memory of having dreamt at all, let alone dreamt this. It all came back to me, in uncomfortably clear-vague bluntness-detail, when I caught a glimpse (just the denotative or associative semantic content of three or seven words) of the note to which I attach this, with its "stonefruit." Bella told me yesterday that, night before last, Phoebe, along with everyone else she knows, was in her dream, too.

The recently-completed mausoleum at Hollywood Forever, in a touchingly Los Angeles-beautiful building that I would live in as gladly as I would the Shakespeare tower at the

Barbican.

These houses we saw yesterday evening.

I was impressed with this strangely halfhearted take on the mansard, and I loved its topmost balconies, but Bella said she hates this kind of roof.

In this one there were many people enjoying a soccer match on a massive and brilliant flatscreen.

This is from Los Feliz Blvd., whose east-of-Commonwealth section, which always seems to me less familiar than it should, many of the apartments unexpectedly tall, no matter how many times I drive it.

All these street-view images lack the early-evening softness of light, shade in light, that defined their common memory-space in my dream.
My beloved girl sleeps now, flat to the bed, nearly flush to the mattress's surface under the cover. Her spine and legs not quite straight, she seems flat and armless, head off the pillow, mouth closed, beautiful and peaceful, her face all that is exposed to the soft warm air close to 11 a.m.]

5 April 2025

Chanel beads (“coffee culture,” “unifying thought”) vs TLF trio (Opening night, Sweet Harmony), completely distinct paths towards the creation of a sculptural entity out of sound: With Chanel Beads, what arrives and stays is much more nearly a tone, even if one with vibration, wavering, quivering, and ever-so-slight modulation that could even be called a hint of a melody; whereas, with TLF, what arrives and stays is a melodic figure, four to ten notes say, repeated so many times that it eventually cannot be experienced as anything other than a presence, there with you in the same way as is a sculpture. Both, incidentally, are rarely far from strings.
Separate thought about sound as treated by Chanel Beads: If I somehow frame sound as a tone, a static object to manipulate, can I then modulate a sound by pulling it—at some fixed velocity, say 10% of the way per second elapsed—from one sound (say, a sustained chamber-music chord) toward another (say, a clarion saxophone note)? What does this motion sound like if it is repeated and played like an instrument? Say, with the chamber music chord as the resting point, go 10% of the way to the saxophone over the course of one second, then come back in a quarter of a second, and repeat this second-and-a-quarter unit three times, and then do some variation on it for a fourth iteration, and so on

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Thinking more about what painting really is: it is not alone in being this, but it, and any aesthetic endeavor, is at root (and behind any convenient heuristic restrictions or appearances) a game of attention. That is the only thing real that a painter does: play with the attention of a viewer, make it form in specific ways, ever-so-carefully modulate all of an attention’s presences and absences. That is always the bottom line for a painter, and for any artist. This is why an “attention economy” is the greatest satan that the world of persons can ever have known, because under that regime attention is the orifice which capital rapes unto permanent numbness.

6 April 2025

I am about to draw on a specific locus, and a dangerous kind thereof: those which cloak

themselves in non-site trappings, appearing to me big and from-above or from-below, impossible to circumscribe, and it is thus that they retain their stubborn power. Gaga / Reena and the New Theater.
Not all of it, though--just what comes below.
(Some of the substructure, which I know or have come to know in soft parallel with the condensation of these images: Calla and Max showed (Signs of Wear, 2023) with Reena Spaulings in New York; Gracie Hadland (who introduced them at Tuesday's talk, whose writing I had admired for its un-pin-down-able aloofness which nevertheless maintains specificity of criticality) reviewed a Gaga / Reena group show for Spike a handful of years ago, Avengers.)
The cover for the album Opening Night by ⅔ of TLF Trio, a particular vision of the New Theater's stage which has become maybe the foremost image for this entire knot of things in my head:

Signs of Wear bears the mark of the same prodigiously-abstracted glass--a strange and unique sort of mark, one that burns all traces of anything else:

And then there's the work of Marc Kokopeli, at Reena Spaulings earlier this year:

His press release is an effective condensed document of all the loaded things out of which all this crystallizes.
I append one more thing, of which I know nothing but which reinforces a strain which I hesitate to put my finger but which I think is persistent in Kokopeli's work, that is, cyber-optimist graphic and material aesthetics with a distinctly Euro-global hope tinged by disaffection but not compromised by it and even, perhaps, redoubling its force for all the emptiness out of which it emerges:

So--what can I do to my paintings with this?

These are rolls of window screen Nala gave us; they failed our windows, but I've been gestating desperate thoughts of how to bring them into our panels.

I ordered these cups on Alibaba, in a desperate gesture that imitates at once Kokopeli and Molly Rose Lieberman (whose cups, remember, were the fixed-point of my attention at her exhibition

that I loved without knowledge, on its own terms, having gone to the street-crossing opening just for the concurrent Ginsburg exhibition; and whose painting “Coffee is my Devil” (2021) I recently saw again, when I tried to learn more about the Greene Naftali Spangled Mind show, having mentioned it to the lady at Parker Gallery trying to work toward a more specific posing of my particular & special appreciation for Daisy Sheff)

From My paradise:

From You’re Finally Awake!, one of Theta’s first shows

I also thought to revisit a passionately-held but now-dormant idea with Alibaba’s heaven-sent image-search feature; but I didn’t find anything actionable when I plugged in these images, or at least didn’t feel I have Michael Angelo Bala’s magic touch.

And in the week-to-two-week range of background, there are Lakshmi and Val.

Perhaps most powerful of all the forces binding me to this site, though, is my enthusiasm for Englander's yoginis.

This morning I made a note to myself--via voice, I had not quite time to write it before going to mass, I spent all my before-mass time recording that strange dream I pasted under the 4 April note above--which points to the following knot around "Buddhism Hesychasm":

"Go back through the Englander yoginis press release and the several hesychasm-pertaining pages I opened up this morning and append to my recent note on words like "harmony" and "reality" a handful of new things, including words like "kenosis," "theosis" [which I was floored to hear mentioned by the very young layperson the priest had invited to deliver a Lenten meditation in lieu of a homily], "hesychasm" itself, and in many other words that I don't know yet from the articles this morning, as well as the the books cited on the "Hesychasm" Wikipedia page, and the "Hesychasm" page on, like, orthodox Wiki or something, those books that reminded me of the titles of the books cited in the Englander press release, as well as the title of a book like the one written by a fictional Thai monk, a great teacher. Find out who that actor is [it is a real monk, it seems, whose identity was not revealed] and make a note about how so much is communicated just in the filmed sitting of someone with that kind of training, mention Englander's comments on sitting too (I think that was in an interview she did, not that press release)."

So here that goes:

The prior note was "Titles like "Paradise," "Harmony," "Reality," and so forth: I love them. Paradise was the docufiction video from the bar (one of the bars?) Henkel and Pitegoff ran. Reality is the name of the character in the novel by a critic whose Pitchfork review of Chanel Beads tickled me (and mentioned Ren & Stimpy)." I append "kenosis," "theosis," and "hesychasm." From the Englander press release (Yoginis at Gaga Guadalajara), "orthoprax purity," "Royal ease," "relaxed dominance," "compassion," and "continuum"; and the titles Padma Kaimal, Scattered Goddesses: Travels with the Yoginis, (Association for Asian Studies, 2012); Yuhang Li, Becoming Guanyin: Artistic Devotion of Buddhist Women in Late Imperial China (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020); Enkū, Julian Daizan Skinner, Sumiko Hayashi, Alex Kofuu Reinke Horikitsune, In Heaven's River: Poems and Carvings of Mountain-Monk Enku, (Zenways Press, 2015); Gregory Henderson and Leon Hurvitz, "The Buddha of Seiryōji: New Finds and New Theory," Artibus Asiae 19, no. 1 (1956); and Dōgen's Genjōkōan. Englander said (to Avenue Magazine) "It was a big transition from reading the art history of Buddhism to practicing it, but as I began to practice, I started posing the figures in more accurate and comfortable ways. I sometimes think of the yoginis as 'learning to sit' at the same time as I have been learning to sit." From "The enlightenment of Zen Buddhism and the Hesychastic vision of the divine light," there is "the uncreated light," "light of light," "exaltation," "ecstatic joy," and the comic "omphaloskopoi," and several colorful insights on the commonalities between the two traditions ("This transcendent light is manifested in Jesus Christ, through his whole life and teaching, and especially in the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor and his Resurrection. In this light, all the faithful participants in their daily life will participate in the eschaton, in the End of Days. The hesychasts of the Holy Mountain make every effort to attain

exactly this type of life. This type of theological language concerning God and communion with God always had a real and symbolic taste of the transcendent now, as well as the hope for a more complete taste and fulfillment of God in the future. The hesychasts introduced an intensive realism and a time of completeness in relation with the divine light and filled with God; this fulfillment was realized in their own practice of prayer and in their expectation that during prayer they participate in true uncreated light and are therefore transfigured by the light of the holy transfiguration," "Zazen has a triple purpose: the search to concentrate energy; the experience of the supreme truth as united with the universe that is expressed in warm enthusiasm and the resulting freedom and joy, very often with miraculous events; and the experience of the highest way in all our existence and in our daily life, especially in showing sympathy and love for all living things," "one goes through numerous negative experiences such as doubt, hopelessness, psychological pressures, tears, pain, visions, and hallucinations--visions from the devil," "the world seems to flood from the transcendent light, and superior and wonderful phenomena occur." Then there is this pointer to a greater body of wisdom (the nine treatises, I mean; I'd be on the Palamas side, though I don't think there's really any substantial disagreement): "Gregory Palamas wrote nine treatises defending the practice of the monks against the serious criticism of Barlaam of Calabria, who attacked the hesychasts' psychosomatic method of prayer. That is the idea that through prayer and control of breath the monk concentrated on the navel to attain a vision of the energies of God. For Barlaam, God is known through symbols from the created world, instead of experiencing the divine energies.")

The other pointers are to the work of Sr. Teresa Obolevitch of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, e.g. "God and the World in the Perspective of Apophaticism" and "Onto-theological determinants of aesthetics according to Alexei Losev"; her academic subject matter seems to gravitate around the Dostoevsky-milieu thinkers Vladimir Solovyov and Georges Florovsky, both of whom seem good to me.

And then there is the somewhat-promising CARI vein to mine, and the book Blobjects & Beyond: The New Fluidity in Design, which might indeed finally get all of this (it is a strain, one among a few, present in what draws me with such force to Kokopeli) to find its way into my paintings, the door having been wedged open (by me) with my decision about the little guys--but still I am uneasy about the sense of fracture, the split-in-two corporae of my sources. I want desperately for it all to merge seamlessly. Maybe I need to suppress the gothicism, the easily-recognizable dimension of my transalpine side which I will eventually insist on but which may be too skewing right now? I.e., maybe I need to really push the distilling operation in what I described to Eli as my irreducible devotion to the distillation of all the enormous strangeness and eroticism from quattrocento-and-environs Peinture--distill it so rigorously, I mean, until it could have come from any time and place?

[At Nala's new house, after watching Fennec, in front of the fire:]

Stretch neoprene over aluminum stretchers for a medium- to large-size canvas? Will it prime? Will it degrade?

Neoprene on aluminum stretchers, Aluminum panels, Wood panels with aluminum braces:
I think this assortment sits right with me. There could be plexiglass in the mix too.

I've been thinking a lot recently about pairing my new laser printer with my old spearmint burnishing techniques from Prof Chagoya. Does it even work with toner? Also, could I do it onto a primed panel? These are what I want. This enables certain Guilbeault modulations, desirable, and the input could be something I made (traced or variation-doodled) on tracing paper (with mechanical pencil) or printer paper (with ultra-fine sharpie).
On a related note:
What is nylon ink transfer? See images below
(Both this text and the previous one pertain, too, in a certain way, to what I was noting this afternoon re. Marc Kokopeli & co., which has been evolving as I spent all day thinking about it still and looking into Alibaba more.)

From a quick glance it seems that nylon ink transfer is a heat transfer; this is what would be necessary, too, if I used neoprene; this is the depositing of ink in a layer over the fabric, as opposed to sublimation, wherein the ink becomes part of the fabric.

[Struck, the following afternoon, by the beauty of this saddle. Alibaba emailed it to me, along with pictures of ultrasound wands and red bulbs (the latter under the heading "other animal husbandry equipment").]

[On 7 April 2025:]

One last appendix: An idea has come to me, or rather resurfaced; it is the small raft of correlatives I began to gather who knows how long ago, which all live (basically) under the pointer of the figure of the puppet in Rilke: Guignol, Baer's Mozart, Punch and Judy, etc. But

they resurface with a glowing new cast: Could I reassemble puppets like these, using only blobject Kokopeli-cast spare parts from Alibaba? Then I would have “little guys” with both adequate form and adequate texture. And then I could either paint them, in their scenes, or I could stage the puppet theater in the center of a painting show. The voices could be open-source text-to-speech; the marionettist could be animatronic, even, if Alibaba cooperates (Alibaba-willing). And the Duchampian desire-system-logic of the Large glass would be present in this work in exactly the same way as it would animate my paintings--that would be the point.

I’ve re-gathered a couple new correlative-reference-images, with a couple new search terms on DuckDuckGo.

“Guignol puppet theater”:

“Czech puppet theater” (thinking of the child René in Prague):

The most interesting find, however, comes from “Hungarian puppet theater”; there is a repeat-form, perhaps distinguishing itself only because of the repetition, but no matter why I’m looking at it I find in it something desirable (desirably abstract, desirably particular-generic, and pleasing in form besides) in its character. All five images come from an Etsy listing for “Magical Wooden Puppet Theater.”

The abebooks.com result at bottom right is promising, too. Here's a link to it: https://search.worldcat.org/en/title/6592367

And another to The Mobilized Jester: Czech Puppet Theater in Theory and Practice, 1912-1948: https://search.worldcat.org/en/title/1084673936

[One more sidenote, a separate afterthought not without a barely-visible looping-back:]

Are "no wave" aesthetics worth mentioning in connection to Reena Spaulings or New Theater? Only because certain musicians I've been loving lately seem to have possibly-pseudomorphic sonic resemblances to stuff from that moment. TLF Trio and Chanel Beads (and its pendant, Colle's Montalvo): These are the recent additions to my autistic-fixation love of Mk.gee, scaffolding my dreamish wist for an image of a boy with a guitar and becoming-angelic words dripping with a nostalgia more cuttingly specific than I've yet found ways to think of making it into painting. From the Centre Pompidou "no wave" exhibition:

7 April 2025

[From yesterday evening, actually]

This Mitchell Kehe press release is basically a perfect distillation of what I mean by blotter-stoner-adjacent; drug presence is not explicitized or necessarily implicated at all, it is all a matter of attention. Duchamp's "inframince" is directly apropos here.

Mitchell Kehe
Who's the Best at Believing
September 11 - October 10

Opening Reception; Saturday, September 11th, 6 - 9pm
15 Orient is delighted to announce the opening of "Who's the Best at Believing"; Mitchell Kehe's second solo exhibition at the gallery.

Faced with whatever comes next, Henry braces herself, then relaxes again realizing she has no idea what it is she's bracing for or what bracing might do or prevent in whatever comes next. She's kneeling on the carpet gripping with her right hand a bunched-up sweatshirt. She's skimming the balled up sweatshirt along the carpet like the belly of an overfed cat . The cat belly might hover just a few millimeters off the surface of the carpet with only belly hairs meeting the fibers; cat fibers meeting carpet fibers. But there's no cat right now, it's just Henry and the scrunched-up sweatshirt.

But here comes the cat, quite fat with long orange and white hair. The creamsicle cat has one crushed ear. It happened in a previous life as a street cat before the current life of being fed too much and the hanging belly and the carpet. Now both the wadded-up sweatshirt and the belly are skimming along the carpet. One is very interested in what the other is doing but it is not mutual; the other couldn't care less about the one. The carpet is a kind of robin's egg blue with a darker blue pattern of dime-sized flower-like shapes, tulips. Henry braces herself again for whatever comes next.

If the cat arriving was the previous whatever comes next then the bracing was probably wasted. But what if this next whatever comes next is bigger and requires preparation? She figures all she can do is position herself so, if needs be, she is able to stand up quickly. She tilts back onto her toes, lifting her knees into a squat so she's able to continue the skimming. This is a far less comfortable position for the activity so the skimming is much jerkier as she tries to maintain her balance. And now she's fallen over.

It's hard to tell if the falling over was the latest whatever comes next or if there was a whatever comes next that was avoided by squatting and this was simply a consequence of over-preparation and an antsy predisposition. From her fallen-over position Henry continues skimming and it is a pleasure. It's a different angle and a different kind of satisfaction. She can see the minute distance she's maintaining between the two things as the one coasts over the other. In her previous kneeling position she was enjoying the sensation of not being able to see how far above the carpet she was skimming but feeling the distance, maybe it was a static electricity or something or maybe who knows how she felt it - we have no idea what the body is capable of. Also, maybe because she has had her spleen taken out her sensitivities are different from someone else's and certainly different from the cat's, though they are both really enjoying the skimming of the sweatshirt, interrupted occasionally by their individual anxieties about whatever comes next.

Mitchell Kehe (b. 1984) lives and works in Queens, New York. In 2016, he received a MFA from the Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam, NL. Kehe's work has been featured in recent solo and group exhibitions including; "Reassembly" (2021) at Galerie Nordenhake, SE, "All the World's Organs" (2019) at 15 Orient, NY, and "Assemble Relatives" (2016) at the Ramfoundation, NL

The exhibition of paintings it accompanied looks, by the way, sublime, maybe the best painting can be now, at least to my current tastes (necessary caveat that would go without saying if I didn't say it and I wish I didn't say it because I feel what I said without the caveat so strongly).

Maybe the Sheff show at Parker was the closest to this kind of painterly perfection-excellence I've come, or no, it was Lieberman at Matthew Brown, but anyway I have seen so little of it that even Sheff's (which I admitted to myself after the fact is a certain small but real step down from the sainted best practitioners thereof) left me positively thrilled.

I add the following to the above, because it is, equally, a perfect-clarification-by-example of something I often say but which is perhaps often opaque. These two snippets, quoted by Domenick Ammirati for Texte zur Kunst from the press release of Josephine Pryde at Reena Spaulings Fine Art, make perfectly real exactly what I mean by the "real" of "Baudelaire-abstraction."

"The sculptures, it turns out, emerged from a mysterious reverie that took place as the artist lay supine on her floor chewing gum: "I chewed at a pace and a rhythm that corresponded to songs by Taylor Swift from her 2019 album, 'Lover,' songs of which I had recall in my mind," Pryde explains with a conspicuous elocution. [1] When the song in her head was finished, she stuck the gum wad onto an item from her collection of beach rocks and driftwood, then moved on to the next song and next stick. Thereafter she had the resulting forms cast in bronze." … "The sculptures, after all, are also attempts to turn experience into tokens of communication: "The gum assumed a form I may call analogous to the compressed resolution of a song, transferred via the jaw from tracks held in the memory." [2] In Pryde's world, the resulting bronzes are no different from a photograph; both groups of work are as indexical as a fingerprint."

I add a third fragment of the review, not a quotation, with one insertion of my own in brackets, because it adds to what I mean. "Or perhaps it's better to say that, under the pressure Pryde exerts – under the pressure of our historical-technological moment, whose conditions Pryde so elegantly exposes – the index loses meaning, despite the fervent reinscriptions of both essence and presence to which so many of us, all of us, cling. Who knows how long Pryde's bathroom shelf is? Does she know? Like identities, our memories are [real] inventions: each time they are called up, they are created anew."

A writing / printing trobatum:

A productive misreading: I could have a cover with a title ("IN LIPS / BETWEEN LIPS"), complete with handwritten "message"-text immediately below, like that. Or it could be nice if it

was something in French, too. And the pages inside can look like this, and this will be one way in which I could finally get my written stuff out of the computer:

A new list of GRI Panel Painting Initiative resources, these seeming even more starting-point-conducive, solid sound knowledge:

Initiative overview https://www.getty.edu/conservation/our_projects/education/panelpaintings/index.html

Resources links https://www.getty.edu/projects/panel-paintings-initiative/

Full text “Wooden Supports in 12th to 16th Century European Paintings” https://marette.smk.dk/-9706.html

Full text “Frames and Supports in 15th- and 16th-Century Southern Netherlandish Painting” https://balat.kikirpa.be/tools/frames/II/

Full bibliography library search https://aata.getty.edu/primo-explore/search?query=any,contains,panel%20paintings&tab=aata&search_scope=AATA&vid=AATA&facet=domain,include,GCIBibs%20-%20Panel%20Paintings%20Initiative&lang=en_US&offset=0

And these things, the body of knowledge to which they and the Baxandall book Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy (the only work of his I was exposed to, four years ago, in my first Lugli class; it was its first part, which begins with “Conditions of trade,” pp. 1-27) point, belong in the company of a different corpus of craft-knowledge, that which I am craving from Custam Art Surfaces, company with which I interviewed today; the best condensation of what I’m looking for is in this document I produced for them: Supports images(And, after yesterday, I add the name Mitchell Kehe, with quiet and ardent love.) (And, today, I was ready to talk about Merlin James and Andrew Kerr with my interviewers, too.)

Nothing less than the onement of art, desire, God, sex, beauty (reality, redemption, paradise, harmony, theosis, ecstasis, ascesis): Love.
(This in answer, my answer, to "what to fabbro-Make in the hollow core that I found inside all of the art that drew me in"; I name all that art Symbolism (and thus what I make will be re-Symbolism) and at least it had the merit (nothing else did) of staking an axiomatic devotion-faith that an empty mystery is worth preserving rather than leaving the world with no mystery at all; and this Symbolism includes Modernism, too, because any Modernism worthy of the name is a strict subsequence (like a sequel) out of Symbolism (how? Because only the most cynical subcurrents within Modernism—Léger, say—abandoned the mystery-core that permanently beats as Symbolism's heart. All Modernism worthy of the name keeps that heart beating—and that heart is difference-repetition, and the only things that fall off that line and are totally devoid of value are the collapses into utter mechanicity (into unredeemable dead capital-function, into the Machine); let Léger stand for these for now, fairly or not; their real faces are algorithms, of course).)

8 April 2025

The beauty of the trace of "Lavazza" here makes me want to print "Lelit" just as beautifully crisp. Such is the state of my aspiration, heartstrings sawn like horsehair cello catgut so that, if I do get this job fabricating canvas, making one dollar more than minimum wage with only ten days of vacation per year (total, including illness), so that I accumulate very little money and what little I accumulate cannot be put immediately towards the one thing in the world I like to spend money on (flying to Europe), I will bide for months and then buy a Lelit.

At Parker Gallery's new location I was floored, engorged, by the ravishing smell of paint. Oil's seductive, history-laden, linseed-and-mineral poison stink.

"Walking through ÄLñ§ñ, Yi's first commercial solo gallery show in New York in nearly a decade, I was reminded of a piece from 2015, from her exhibition at the Kitchen, for which a custom-crafted scent, based on the smell of mega-gallery Gagosian, was diffused in the venerable, alternative nonprofit space. But Gladstone's newly expanded Chelsea gallery smelled like art during my visit, like nothing really; the acrylic paintings didn't even exude oil's

seductive, history-laden, linseed-and-mineral poison stink.”

Just now I took these pictures. The light reflecting through the curdled medium and the dusty glass reminded me of Wolfgang Tillmans. (In the offices of Regen Projects, feeling tears in my chest before the end of yet another moment in life that will end without reverse-traversability, before the last performance, that is, I told Phoebe that a photograph of empty avocado hulls on a counter was by Tillmans, a photographer with a magical ability to alchemize trash into unadulterated beauty, solo subject of the only exhibition in San Francisco I ever liked.)

Still on the camera’s card was this picture, from a couple weeks ago, evidently born of the same impulse, though I’d forgotten taking it.

On 30 March 2025, while driving on Fountain about to cross

Google’s Street View provides a slightly better version of the same.

What I wanted was those Little Guys.

I sent Mindy this little guy on her birthday.

What?! Uriel Acosta (subject of the primary painting of Meijer de Haan)--who is he, really?

The following two set-designs are due to the painter Nathan Altman:

A unique Cubist achievement, a simple espresso-cup meditation, really, also from Altman:

And then two more mainstream Cubist works by him which nevertheless reveal a keen eye linked to a situated heart:

It is the last photograph, it seems, that is all that remains of de Haan's painting.

This excerpt from a massive 2017 text called The unknown masterpiece (titled and largely written in German, I think, but with some English inside) by the all-powerful Vienna gallery Meyer Kainer (Reena Spaulings, Amelie von Wullfen, Dan Graham, Hélène Fauquet, etc.) intersects briefly and brilliantly with the core of my oscillatory espresso-cup work.

The thing is probably worth reading in full. It has Didi-Huberman and La bella noiseuse threaded through it, as well as Balzac, and all the gallery's artists, plus West, Kippenberger, &c.

Look at these two, one Schutz one Yuskavage:

Dude of sorrows.

9 April 2025

The most striking turn of argument so far in Leo Steinberg's Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion is contained in these four-odd paragraphs, with emphasis mine.

"Now 'what man praises most especially in God are his works and deeds.' Of these, the first was the act of Creation; but his second great 'deed' was his becoming flesh and dwelling on earth. And the sermons affirm that God's first accomplishment was surpassed in the second, since the former had proved corruptible through man's sin, but the latter, which redeems from corruption, is good forever.

'The theology of the Western Church,' writes O'Malley, 'has generally tended to pinpoint the redemptive act in Christ's death on the cross, or in the conjunction of his suffering, death, and resurrection.' The more surprising to hear the Renaissance preachers [who were the subject of O'Malley's groundbreaking research that made Steinberg's present work possible] emphasizing the preeminence of the Incarnation. 'That emphasis,' O'Malley continues, 'wants to view all the subsequent events of Christ's life as articulations of what was already inchoately accomplished in the initial moment of man's restoration, which was the incarnation in the Virgin's womb…. Whatever injury man and the universe had suffered in the Fall was healed … when the Word assumed flesh.'

Shall this insight stop at the work of the preachers? It seems to me--and O'Malley concurs--that the 'incarnational theology' which he finds in the Renaissance sermons is immanent in earlier and contemporaneous Renaissance art. So much of this art is a celebration; so much of it proclaims over and over that godhood has vested itself in the infirmity of the flesh, so as to raise that flesh to the prerogatives of immortality. It celebrates the restoral which the divine power brought off by coming to share man's humanity.

And this supreme feat of God, superior even to the primordial act of Creation, is perpetually manifest in the Incarnation, that is to say, here and now in this armful of babyflesh* [* In the words of St. Bernard, 'God himself is in this babe, reconciling the world to himself' (Song of Songs, I, Sermon II, 8, p.14)]. The wonder of it, and its constant reaffirmation--this mystery is the stuff of Renaissance art: the humanation of God; the more 'superwonderful' (St. Bonaventure's word) the more tangible you can make it.

Thus is the realism of Renaissance painting justified in the faith. …" (12).

Does Steinberg feel the full weight of what he says in the middle two paragraphs? Can he? Is this, in cross-section, the early hours of the Church's assertion of fetal personhood? Is that doctrine bound up inextricably with the great and sprawling Renaissance imagination that Prof. Lugli made so overwhelmingly large and strange in his lecture whose pretext was Michelangelo's birth chart, the Renaissance imagination that held all things pre-encoded in all things, a temper's registration in its birth's stars simply a privileged locus for this all-in-all mutual causation in which no state of affairs is not both upstream and downstream of every other? Perhaps I let my own imagination outpace theirs.

But if, as Steinberg coolly and frontally argues here, Renaissance art is itself an enormous and luminous materialization of precisely this view upon embryogenesis, Dasein-in-the-womb, when the "origin" of our own person slips out of traceable reach up into the others, then where does that leave me now, and all of us who try to redeem the world with the beauty of art, all of us, that is, who are downstream of these painters?

Separately: What I was looking for in Steinberg was precisely such lines as these, sending the reader's imagination out down the strangest arcs:
Ending a half-page footnote, "Had the Trinity's Second Person incarnated as a woman, she would doubtless have resurrected in spectacular pregnancy" (325n30). This as the landing-point of an impeccably and exhaustively argued post-tracing of his "miscarried symbol" subject, Heemskerck's resurrection-erection.
Nudism and Marxism are the twofold allure of O'Malley's reactivation (in his "Postscript") of the same thrillingly revolutionary currents Umberto Eco reanimated in his Nome della rosa (published, it seems, almost exactly contemporaneously: Eco 1980, Steinberg 1981, O'Malley shortly thereafter). "The poverty issue that racked the Franciscan order was still very much alive in the 15th and 16th centuries. Could there, at least in some instances, be a vague allusion to the prophetic, radical impulse articulated in the evocative slogan so popular in the late Middle Ages--'Nudum sequi nudum Christum.' In other words, might there be an ascetical and reform overtone even to the seemingly comfortable scenes of nude infancy?" (215-216). If this is the revolution, perhaps the belowmentioned hero-Christ ("all'antica" because the gods of old were the only models available for the authentic absence of shame that unites the redeemed with the prelapsarian), and Catherine, too, qualified (just a shade more modest) but thereby useful, as a stepstone, are its heroes.
Michelangelo's Risen Christ of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, with the way its physiology can stand next to David and trade force for force while persisting in its distinct otherness (here is not a youth but a man of thirty, in the vigor of his resurrection possessed of the same superlative capacity for twofold athleticism: the quick and the true).

And how Catherine de' Medici bears postmortal witness, delicately charged and perpetually sensory-tensile-active, to an Imitatio Christi carried out unto all extremes, ostentatio genitalium y compris, here, in a rare window onto how that motif would cross the sex reflection, indicating the nipple in a gesture I have tried to collect and have found represented most luminously in "allegories of true love," nascent as is my search.

One more foretaste: The hand with which these hypothesis-interpretations were traced is the same that must generate all the multiplicitous “little guys.”

Global village coffeehouse
https://cari.institute/aesthetics/global-village-coffeehouse

“Peaks in the mid 1990s, falling out of favor later on as the pendulum swung back to the minimalism/tech/clean vibes of Y2K Aesthetic & Gen X Soft Club. … Common motifs include: woodcuts, 'tribal/ancient imagery and iconography', moons, suns, spirals, hands, eyes, stars, simple styled flowing/curvy figures, 'aroma swirls', coffee cups, natural elements like trees/

waves/landscapes, earth tones, hand-drawn look, 'airbrushed dirty look', the earth/globe, hearts, colorful gradated backgrounds …"
It is crucial that what I imagine for my "little guys" has elements in common with both of these things, reconciling two things that react against each other. I recall the "father of the bride" album art explained as inspired by the idea of a "90s eco benefit tour"; already, it is finding a meeting between the clean and minimal and the Zaguán optimism. What if I injected some of the knowing-kitch (is that just camp) GVC into the idea of Santa Teresa community, or Seth Price's Caribbean fiction, or House of Gaga Guadalajara? I don't know what I'm saying. But there is no irony in my undying love for Zaguán.

These gadgets

https://cari.institute/aesthetics/frutiger-aero

And these

https://cari.institute/aesthetics/gen-x-soft-club

More Steinberg SC notes:

Theta got this title from Steinberg?
"The eternal, by definition, experiences neither death nor gentration. If the godhead incarnates itself to suffer a human fate, it takes on the condition of being both deathbound and sexed" (15).

Steinberg is preparing to speak of Michelangelo; I've said before the abyssal responsibility always assumed by artists, who take all of Catholicism into their hands every time they paint anew; I wonder whether, in my ardent devotion to "the onement of beauty, religion, desire, sex, art," whether I will not have to accept this same "conflict unavoidable."
"Modesty, to be sure, recommends covered loins; and the ensuing conflict provides the tension, the high risk, against which our artists must operate. But if they listened to what the doctrine proclaimed; if even one of them disdained to leave its truth merely worded, wanting it plain to see in paint or marble; if such a one sought to behold Christ in a faultless manhood from which guilt was withdrawn, that is to say, as a nakedness immune to shame; if one such Renaissance artist held his idiom answerable to fundamental Christology so as to rethink the doctrine in the concretion of his own art; then, surely, conflict—if not within himself then with society— was unavoidable. He would be caught between the demands of decorum, lest the sight of nobly drawn genitalia further inflame the prurience of human nature, and the com-mand, deeply internalized, to honor that special nature whose primal guiltlessness would be disgraced by a "garment of misery"" (19).

11 April 2025

Trying to find out what biofeedback machine Aunt Jean uses, I ended up with this gorgeous interpellation of advertisements, more successfully poised to penetrate my soul than any others which algorithm has bequeathed me, into webpage.

I got there from a page that this directory seems to have autogenerated for Jean.

Another page I'd have liked to capture better, but here it is cut into parts:

I just found a pretty good approximation of my aspirations for the privacy screen, but I still need to work out how it can fit into my paintings as I think of them so far:
https://nirv.in/tc/TC_PR_Theta_2023.pdf
https://www.theta.nyc/tonychrenka
Anyway, this, along with the neoprene, is pending some auratic- and haptic-knowledge I hope to almost immediately internalize at CAS.

Gabriel Orozco may be a hitherto-underknown (to me) touchstone showing one way in which things I need to braid or weld or neoprene-suture together--namely, Mondrian and 21st-century omnivoriety--can be neoprene-sutured.

These two pictures, in just a glance, prove the omnivoriety. But luminous details within them prove a sensitivity to, a finger on the blood-coursing life-rhythm of, the kind of eye I have been trying to cultivate for years: that which is (a) always sensitive to an immediately-palpable and unmistakable active balance, even if he does not always succeed doubly in the activity and the balance (even if not always, he does succeed brilliantly, as in the abstraction I isolate below); and which also is (b) always trying to parse out the diagrammatic structures within all entities (images of any sense-stripe)--see the semi-overpainted football still, below, in which the schematic Englander-anatomical correlatives are evidently tuned w/r/t dimensions of modulation that correspond to all the optically-haptically-kinetically active dimensions of the football-moment itself.

These are both from gabriel orozco: politécnico nacional, museo jumex 2025.

Same time, place, and spirit as SALA's summer show last year:

https://www.emergentmag.com/interviews/nick-irvin-and-amalia-ulman

And also similarly a success by diva corp's tennis match standards. But I don't know how to align myself with these nascent impulses.

Vision of neoprene-type materials: The series of relatively simple ambiguities, Guilbeault-modulated little guys caught in indeterminacy between BJJ and a transalpine sutra, can be sublimation prints on crisp never-washed Chinese fabric, likely white (and maybe a couple other colors too) ink on black, stretched by means I'll learn ca. Monday but not really being a stretched canvas with a frame, more like looking like they're caught in a stretching apparatus, like in production; and there can be a pile of shirts, indistinguishable except in that they're not stretched, on the floor. This in parallel with real (more full, more complex, larger) paintings, neoprene (which cannot be sublimation-printed on) on chassis, and aluminum and pvc and plexi surfaces, etc.

Stretchings—and perhaps other trappings—not dissimilar from these.

Random signifiers: Ámsterdám (that street, its street views), and this frog

12 April 2025

If you can tease apart two corporae of forms or images or figures, from Painting and Lyric (on the one hand) and from cartoon / corporate lines / lowercase contemporary art / all of the substrates of the “little guys” (on the other), then maybe you can do the same with my supports / materials, oil and wood and rabbit skin (on the one hand) and neoprene, aluminum, liquitex basics gesso, flashe, plexi, pvc, Mylar, sublimation printing, inkjet transfer, and ultrafine sharpie (on the other). All that matters is in the contact between, the rubbing up of membranes, the light emergent between the two more or less distant realities: the sharpie ink bleeding into the razor-scraped rabbit skin, the linseed oil folding its scent into neoprene’s. Such is mind, prismatic.

A drunken thought:

Hi John, somewhat of an oddball ask, but do you think Magnus might be willing to go for coffee or something, this afternoon or dinner Monday evening? I talked with him just for a second at the opening, which was lovely, by the way, Bella and I had a beautiful time. If his time in LA is too packed I understand completely. I just had some more questions I’d have liked to ask if I had more time there. I could reach out to some outlets and see about publishing something in an interview format, but only if this sounds interesting to him—otherwise, it would just be questions to a painter from another painter / curious spirit. Didn’t want to impose so I thought I’d ask through you and see if it’s something you thought he’d be down for!

13 April 2025

On the way to St Brendan’s:

Maybe I'm just a little bit caffeine manic right now, but I think that I would like to have a webpage on which I post more than just things that are formatted as exhibition reviews. In general everything will be much longer form than Diva Corp or Critics Corner

I still think “mostly painting” would be a funny title for it

To preface it, I want to make a note to basically say: “What am I doing: I am looking for a specific kind of experience. It’s borderline religious. I hope to find it in Los Angeles, looking at mostly paintings. It’s a bit quixotic, but I have not been uniformly disappointed. In fact I seem to have found more cause to sing praise than some others who have set out with similar aims. (I don't need to name diva corp or Sean Tatol or Schjeldahl or Dave Hickey.) Also add: Even when I apply a critic’s metrics, even when I’m being a critic, I'm not, really. I'm a painter. I'm writing as someone who is trying to make what I'm trying to find, often at the same time. (I'm no longer

feeling great about showing all these cards.)
This is kind of a separate note from that first one, but I'll include it in the same breath. It's basically to say:
Slow Learner: In the background, or, maybe more often than I think, in the foreground, there's the null hypothesis that I don't know what I'm looking at or what I'm saying. That I'm a slow learner (like how Pynchon described himself in his collection of stories, maybe I can lift a couple lines from that preface.) At this point that hypothesis is moot and getting mooter, as I continue to find what I set out for, with or without self- for substructure-awareness at all points along the way. The proof is in the pudding.
Then a completely separate note about my paradiso terrestre: I think that list of names deserves its own little post or something. It needs to be added that an intermittently shrinking, but still significant, portion of these names are ones whose work I've never seen. To that extent, the list is more a "lives of the saints" than a visited monastery: These are exemplars whose mist has drifted to me, often across distance and transformation, exhibition documentation here playing the role of secondhand (or even more distant) word of mouth, the content perhaps amplifying like those of the saints of old. If that's so, then it happens in just the right way: Again, the proof is in the pudding. But when I do meet the work in the flesh, it is as a bodily homage, like to a guru or a lama, whether (as often happens) long after or (as also happens) long before I've come to adore it, in which latter cases, like in Siddhartha, the spirit transmits even without the cognitive recognition.
(I still don't know how I want to format, whether in a line like a continuous scroll or with links maybe in a two column format where the left column is links and the right column fills with the text and images, not images lifted from gallery websites, just the ones that I snapshotted.)
I want to maybe imitate that palm reader website I've found. I also still want to include a picture from thousand steps beach, building out the biofeedback-chakra-unlocking-starseed tone, and maybe the album cover Bella made called Palm Reader, and maybe more biofeedback specific stuff (if I can get my hands on it, through Jean) as emblematic of the kind of semi-crackpotted, but ultimately sincere, tone of all the "quasi-theology": Crackpotted, but ultimately sincere, as all colors bleed together into one reverse-prism beam, at the bottom of Gen Z's apotheosis of forebears' registers of irony: For us now, there's no tacit proposition cloaked within the ultimately simple veil of irony's statement of the opposite of what is meant; the layers of emptied speech superpose ad infinitum, their mise-en-abyme becoming a glass onion through which there flows a unified ray of light, the sole and total utterance, the only of which we're capable.
If it's a list of things down the left side to click on and make little pages, possibly with footnotes, pop up, I think the first one should be What am I doing, the second one should be Slow learner, and then there should be a heading that says Shows, mostly and then things like exhibitions and maybe movies too, maybe not. can be in that list there. And then that there's another thing that says Even stranger stuff, and it can have a link to my Trobata carta and my Linearizing carta, and those will be separate-looking pages from which basically everything else can be navigated to, and maybe there will be a quick note on the etymology of "trobata," and also some note maybe in What am I doing that there's more than 1 million words embedded in these pages and that that's somewhat funny to me because I don't right now really think that I have a knack for writing. I used to think so, but I don't right now something that can go under Shows, mostly would be a very trimmed version of notes on being in Georgia's play, or just "On being in a play." Maybe also a Power Ranking of churches, Casimir number one, Saint Brendan number

two perhaps the most gorgeous, that Korean one somewhere down the line for its priest unparalleled in thoughtfulness, Blessed Sacrament next door to Overduin sneaking into the list--I hated it at first, but its mass times made it my backup, and over the course of a year I developed a taste for its cavernous haunted aspect, in conjunction with the Jesuit eeriness of Christian-rock-ified Catholic music.

Also in What am I doing: being transparent to the crystalline extreme, gracelessly bare, more naked than erotically nude. If I know it's unsexy, then why? Because no one does it. Also somewhere in that note point to the negative criticism thing, and say that I have my own way out of the constantly-invoked crisis of criticism that that article was about. Instead of leaning into negativity, I turn to a heightened selectivity; choose carefully enough what to talk about, and then you get the privilege of singing authentic unchecked praise about only that which you really love, and pass over the rest in a damning silence. This rationalization aside, I do find myself adoring more art than others in town would have you believe is good. I chalk this up to an inborn catholicity (omnivoriety, not Catholicism) in my personality: If I see even a glimmer of light, I'll focus on it until I can mesmerize myself with its glow. Why wouldn't you, if you could?

When early on I said "borderline religious" I could have said "quasi theological," that label Ben Davis deployed as an expression of trepitation, a cautionary distancing from something he sensed within Tatol's project. I think it's better deeply examined than cautiously dismissed. Why is it, all the way down, that art seems so often to bump against religion? The easiest answer is that both are keyed to beauty, in the most abstract sense--that is, in a view so zoomed out that beauty and goodness converge in the language of the inexpressible. Of course, that register is hardly conducive to discourse; if the subject becomes inexpressible, what is there to say? So everything is a matter of staying just below that altitude, toeing the water's edge of the sublime, while maintaining contact with the sand that is language. You'll wet your feet inevitably, and not rarely, if you're lucky.

If, in all this, I come off as too blithely blissed out, don't take it for a sign that I'm unaware of the pitfalls. They are, of course, tremendous, and the stakes of "quasi-theologizing" anything have never been higher. I'm just choosing nakedness over stylish obscurantism. There's already too much of the latter, and its extreme opposite would be salutary.

I can even duplicate this ad, that Martijn's website gave me again. Here are the links:
The triangle with the i:
The rest in order: $3.50 $65 $35 $160

These are also beautiful:

Best Molokini Snorkeling Tours

And:

Aclk

16 April 2025

Today I had my third day at CAS. I was so tired during and after the drive back home, through a Chongqing-esque tunnel near Little Tokyo, that I couldn't talk about anything besides the feeling of wanting to die! Not the feeling of wanting to kill myself, and definitely not wanting to die, but rather the feeling of wanting to die; maybe the next most accurate way to say it is the feeling of actively being convinced that life, my life, is not of value, if the best way I've come up with spending it involves grinding so many of its hours away in this manner, like so much roughness off a spinning wheel.

I had been eagerly awaiting the chance to record every single detail of perception and action, the phenomenon that fills my days, suddenly. I had been anticipating a chryselephantine enshrinement of every tiniest detail of that phenomenon. But now I cannot even do that for any individual detail, to serve synecdochally, let alone for all the details, as I wanted.

Ever since learning from Gracie Hadland, in a review I read in advance of the talk she was to introduce, of a show about which I'd already read one review and one interview, that the show's title, End of Thinking Capacity, "is sometimes, falsely, cited as an etymology for the abbreviation of et cetera," I think intermittently of this phrase, and each time I do, I think of the images I've seen of this exhibition. I have been thinking only of the two paintings that I remember, Flag of Hawaii and Arrival.

Revisiting the whole set of images, and Gracie's animation of the "critics" sculptures, I am even more compelled by some other paintings, or at least just as compelled by them. The first bears a

remarkable title: “Draft of a sculpture of the Son of man on Patmos abandoned in Delaware.” I read from Gracie also that “The works almost exist as stand-ins for the Big Paintings that dominate the art world Sutter-Shudo seems to be responding to, yet these well-executed examples do not feel ironic or cynical so much as whimsical,” but I clock an echo only in the last one, an echo of Schutz, reference included below it.

Besides these things, what, in particular, though functionally it could have been anything, is suffocating me tonight, is, it so happens, the grave of Marcel Broodthaers, the same artist’s variations of Mallarmé’s Coup de dés (which involved, among other things, blocked out words on aluminum panels; I learned from Hailey, though it remains a rumor in conflict with what Joe and Peter told me, that CAS produces aluminum panels from time to time; if this is true, it may change my life), Bataille’s Histoire de l’œil, and the mysterious figure of Tatsuhiko Shibusawa, who imported modern art (notably, a Cocteau translation) to Japan, acting as a filter privileging the dark, the erotic, the exotic, and the magical, but who is almost nonexistent in English, save for Takaoka’s Travels (from the latter part of his life, in which he worked mainly on fantasy novels). I learned about him in Gaga’s Sutter-Shudo press text: “Imagery taken from book covers and other printed matter betray the artist’s wayward bibliophilic proclivities. … also a portrait of the French revolutionary Saint-Just taken from the cover of a book by Tatsuhiko Shibusawa. … If actual human viewers feel sidelined by Sutter-Shudo’s auto-critical installation, which pretends to consume and complete itself, we can now be as delinquent and free-ranging as the artist.”

17 April 2025

Sade firsthand, for the first time, I think. One detail stands out, a description of a position of a conjunction of bodies in space, which could be useful for my paintings, though I am not quite yet sure how; “Philosophie dans le boudoir” is not what I have had in mind each time I’ve said “transalpine sutra,” even if, come to think of it, it well could have been. So maybe this is something to confuse (con-fuse) with things from brazilian jiu-jitsu (or--do I want to open it up?--other things, too, judo, such as in the French book I found yesterday, which was not the below, though the below looks great).

“Donatien” I keep calling him in my head, Donatien Alphonse François, Marquis de Sade. I’ve encountered this name only a few times, few enough that “Donatien Grau” remains its only concretely recollectable instance; he is a Louvre curator, the one who wrote the book about Los Angeles in Latin.

Arriving, like “Donatien Grau,” as a fully-packaged phonetic phrase with no signification attached, “Sade mon prochain” was soon recollected as a Pierre Klossowski title. I recall it is really due to a premise of his, or perhaps an idea of what Rohmer owed to Sade, __: something like, and maybe this is really only true to the former,* the idea of bodies serialized, the charging of all dimensions of the Deleuzean difference-repetitional analytic by means of this premise (the repetition of bodies). I think, specifically, of Klossowski’s Living Currency. I had to revisit the 15 Orient page for the Hardy Hill exhibition there, the one with the reading list, to find this title.

[* As to the latter, I retrieve the source for this idea of mine: Brody, about to conclude a Marquise von O review: “Rohmer was a sort of Christian Freudian who, far from fretting over neurotic self-denial, saw it as the very definition of virtue; he was also a secret Sadean, who perceived terrifyingly destructive furies at work just beneath the elegant surfaces of society.”]

In revisiting that page, I clicked another of its links, one I hadn’t looked at before; it’s a text of only three pages, by Roland Barthes, on the photographer Wilhelm von Gloeden. A notable line: “Today more than ever there is a great audacity in mingling so simply, as he did, the most "cultural" culture and the most luminous eroticism. Who has done so? Sade, Klossowski

perhaps ...” By the way, I have been seeing, lately, many resemblances to Anthony Federico, and a von Gloeden subject supplies another, but only upon very first glance; maybe it is even the “hero eyes” that, I’ve heard, a new friend of theirs has ascribed to him.

But I think it is this photo, lacking nearly all of his most recognizable means, which is the baron’s greatest success.

Another such link is to Gerard Genette’s Narrative Discourse: an Essay in Method. The following is from Genette’s Wikipedia: “[The] outline [which succeeds this quotation] of Genette's narratology is derived from Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method. This book forms part of his multi-volume work Figures I-III. The examples used in it are mainly drawn from Proust's epic In Search of Lost Time. … One criticism which had been used against previous forms of narratology was that they could deal only with simple stories, such as Vladimir Propp's work in Morphology of the Folk Tale. If narratology could cope with Proust, this could no longer be said.”

Propp’s work is, of course, due even to the title alone, of enormous interest to my differential-repetitional analytics, and to my “alternative history of lyric.”

Anton Webern is said to have admired four painters in his provincial Austrian Catholic upbringing; I know three--Segantini (the alps at the Getty), Hodler, and Böcklin, but the the fourth, Moritz von Schwind, supplies somehow a cartoonish (maybe something in common with Eric McHenry, about whose particular transalpine cartoonishness I spoke with Greg Jenkins) modality of Poussin’s interchangeable-figure dioramatization, and also such compositions as compore to Pontormo’s Life of Joseph.

The Rose, or The Artist’s Journey, 1846.

A Player with a Hermit, 1846

The Dream of the Prisoner, 1836

Cinderella, to go on the ball, 1852

And all this, maybe because of Webern (whether this is a legitimate connection or not--i.e., whether Webern was ever mentioned by the artist--I cannot say; I just remember “structuralist music” or whatever these Modernist tonal or atonal modes of composition are called, I know hardly a thing about it all), reminds me of Nate Boyce.

[I add on Thursday, 17 April 2025, that here is the Webern Boyce connection: the source of his animation redrawing was a video of a George Balanchine choreography for a Webern piece, Concerto for nine instruments, op. 24.]

18 April 2025

Yesterday, Boss Peter called the panels from my first completed order “exquisite,” and seemed to really mean it. He is not at all without humor, but he is not given to b.s., and so I was really happy to hear his words: “These are really good,” and then a pause, “Like, these are exquisite.”

Later, I hear as I walk through “the yard,” I don’t know if it was an echo in my head or if I

was actually listening to “Unifying Thought,” the lines “Man up on the cross / write up from your boss.” (Each time I hear that line, I think also of Elizabeth Englander’s crucifixes made from swimsuit fabric; see below a picture from that Theta exhibition mentioned above, Deathbound and Sexed.)
I connect these two speech-fragments, somehow.

Today, also, is Good Friday.

19 April 2025

Not “why are they good” but rather why does everyone seem to love Eli Keszler and Nate Boyce? Why has their performance been associated with MoMA, Pompidou, etc, and a video work of Boyce’s acquired by SFMOMA twelve years ago? I learned last night that Keszler had a show at Pepe before Boyce, and that he is dating Anna Khachiyan, who wrote that article long ago published by SFMOMA. Whence the appetite for avant-garde jazz? Is that really what it is?

I awoke this morning with the phoneme “le baphomet” in my head, faintly while still in bed and then more clearly as I looked into my new metallic cup of espresso, the latter due to a conjunction of two loose codings: Bella had twice remarked that these metal cups, with their saucers and tiny spoons, seemed “middle eastern”; and “baphomet,” while referring to a protean cast or knot of figures all its own, was indeed used as a name for Mohammed (Mahomet) at one point in time, notably by Ramon Llull. As for Baphomet: this is not the sort of esoterica I want to get myself wrapped up in, as far as coding my work, not at all; but I am taken with the quality of these illustrations, and with the beginnings of a picture painted by the following opening of a review (Caillois!), by my somewhat dull but exquisitely situated old friend Ian James.

On the morphology of crosses: Do Michelangelo and Tiepolo both imagine Christ to have been crucified not in the manner of arms at full extension, hands nailed to the face of the crossbeam, but rather hung by the armpits over a much shorter crossbeam that would not have accommodated the more commonly depicted type of affixing? This would situate both within the minor but immeasurably more gut-turning (and, for that matter, in multiple senses transalpine) tradition of the Meester van het Sint-Anna-altaar in Kalkar, whose Dismas and Gestas, the Good and the Bad Thieves (c. 1490-1510) wedged themselves deep within my mind-gut immediately as the old Dutchman attending that low-ceilinged gallery, the best in the enormous museum, showed them to me, telling me they were his favorite.

From London I noted "... a cross which is hard but so striking to imagine outside of its setting in this painting-time."

Just a couple of starting-points for building my familiarity with Hesychasm, via mostly Encyclopedia Britannica.

Mt. Athos is where Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) got his first training and spent maybe the two most significant chunks of his life. Northeastern Greece--I'd like to go.

Greek hēsychia means "divine quietness"

"St. John Climacus, one of the greatest writers of the Hesychast tradition, wrote, "Let the remembrance of Jesus be present with each breath, and then you will know the value of the hēsychia." In the late 13th century, St. Nicephorus the Hesychast produced an even more precise "method of prayer," advising novices to fix their eyes during prayer on the "middle of the body," in order to achieve a more total attention, and to "attach the prayer to their breathing." This practice was violently attacked in the first half of the 14th century by Barlaam the Calabrian, who called the Hesychasts omphalopsychoi, or people having their souls in their navels."

"In [Palamas's] view, the human body, sanctifiedby the sacraments of the church, is able to participate in the prayer, and human eyes may become able to see the uncreated light that once appeared on Mount Tabor on the day of Christ's Transfiguration. The teachings of Palamas were confirmed by the Orthodox church in a series of councils held in Constantinople (1341, 1347, 1351). Hesychast spirituality is still practiced by Eastern Christians and is widely popular in Russia through the publication of a collection of Hesychast writings, known as the Philokalia, in Greek in 1783 at Venice and in Slavonic in 1793 at St. Petersburg."

But, as I've indicated previously, I likely can't stand behind many of the positions Palamas committed himself to. I have a suspicion that, born into the Byzantine court, he remained a politicker on some deep level. Even in his disputes with Barlaam of Calabria, by no means a hero, I don't find myself instinctively finding Gregory in the right. And in the latter part of his life, even more cause for hesitation: "" Despite all this, much as with John Chrysostom, there is a (golden, of course) kernel flashing itself throughout, a light you can never trust not to glimmer, which is, ultimately, what the Saint's name (in each of these two cases) stands for--the Saint, not the man, not the body; such is, paradoxically (and excruciatingly topically, given that theosis is the continuously central problematic), the way the body-mind(-soul) calculus of this particular ascesis (I am thinking along lines traced by Harpham in his Ascetic Imperative, lines with which I'm only cursorily familiar) shakes out.

"The tradition of the Jesus Prayer goes back to the "prayer of the mind," recommended by the ancient monks of the Egyptian desert, particularly Evagrius Ponticus (died 339). It was continued as the "prayer of the heart" in Byzantine Hesychasm, a monastic system that seeks to achieve divine quietness. Since the 13th century, mental prayer was frequently connected with psychosomatic methods, such as a discipline of breathing. In modern times the practice of the Jesus prayer was popularized by the publication of the Philokalia (1782), an anthology of texts by various authors on mental prayer. The Jesus Prayer is commonly recited with the aid of a

prayer rope."

Philokalia ("Love of the Good, the Beautiful") might be a useful phrase w/r/t what I have recently taken to naming with the Newman word onement and an organically open list of things gathered, I guess, around the greek kalos: beauty, God, art, eros, desire.

"The Philokalia had great success in the Slavic countries, especially Russia, and a Church Slavonic version appeared in 1793 in St. Petersburg under the title of Dobrotoliubie. It was translated by the starets (spiritual leader) Paissy Velitchkovsky, who introduced a neo-Hesychast spiritual renewal into Russian and Moldavian monasticism. Whereas in Greece the Philokalia apparently had little influence outside certain schools of monasticism (although attempts were made to reach a wider public with new editions in 1867 and 1957), the Church Slavonic version became, through the influence of the startsy, one of the favourite spiritual books of all classes of Russian laity during the 19th century."

"Saint Nicodemus the Hagiorite (born 1748, Naxos Island, Ottoman Empire [now in Greece]—died July 14, 1809, Mount Athos; canonized May 31, 1955) was a Greek Orthodox monk and author of ascetic prayer literature. He was influential in reviving the practice of Hesychasm, a Byzantine method of contemplative prayer."

"Euthymius Of Tŭrnovo (born c. 1317—died c. 1402) was an Orthodox patriarch of Tŭrnovo, near modern Sofia, monastic scholar and linguist whose extensive literary activity spearheaded the late medieval renaissance in Bulgaria … Bulgarian by birth, Euthymius joined the monastery of Kilifarevo, near modern Burgas, Bulg., where he became the leading disciple of Theodosius, whom he succeeded as spokesman for Hesychasm, the Byzantine movement of contemplative prayer. Characteristic of this school, Euthymius travelled to various monastic communities at Constantinople and Mt. Athos (northeastern Greece), practicing the ascetic discipline and working in a Greco-Slavic environment as a copyist of manuscripts and a writer."

He seems admirable so far! But when in the opening lines of the entry we learn that it was he who "erected the theological and legal bases for the Orthodox churches of Eastern Europe," my crest falls, because it is precisely the theological and legal bases which are the Orthodox churches' downfall, in my view. The spirit is strong but the theological and legal bases are weak. Nonetheless, to imagine visiting his home, today known as "Veliko Tŭrnovo," makes my heart sing. To walk in these dense green woods, to see those hills, and the town below them, blanketed in snow.

20 April 2025

On Wednesday last, I declared an intention to find out who's the better between Charles Lock Eastlake and Ralph Mayer, because there's a copy of each one's paintcraft handbook on the shelf at CAS.

Later in the day I noted Boss Peter's suspicion of "Weston" from Mark Grotjahn's studio, as a Diva Corp candidate, because he's "intellectual enough"; the paintings he makes, if he means Weston Uram, don't seem to betray a mind opinionated enough, in my callous opinion.

Today after Easter mass I ate Lithuanian desserts and, through Cris, I met characters familiar but hitherto unnamed: Lucy, Antony, Anna.

When, last night, drinking my martini, Sarah Kelly suggested I run a gallery out of my own apartment, too, and serve martinis, and everyone will come, I said, "And I can call it 'Martini's.'"
Strangely, also, at some other point in the night, maybe in connection to passing through the Dresden, or looking at that tower where I was stood up for a showing, or maybe even thinking of Alex's apartment with its absurd sound system, genuinely impressive bookshelves, and solid marble table upon which the movie club's viewing screen sits, the phrase appeared in my head fully formed: "Swanky P's Los Feliz Condo."

New Hadland Sietsema interview in LARB is great—points of alignment, points of fine distinction, points of curiosity.
Alignment: Painting as prismatic object, superposition (of object-origin-eras, in his case, but, in my case, generalized to superposition of anything, any attribute/aspect): "if an artwork collapses a technique from one era, an object from another era, like a magazine, and then maybe a coin from another era, and all of that expands but they collapse one single moment."
Fine distinction: "I do use the idea of a painting as the system. There are other systems involved, but a painting as an object with its own history and existence in different forms is a system that I like to start with. I think that makes them actually deep painting, in a way, and not just painting. Because I do consider what a painting is, and I look at a lot of painting, and I always think about what a painting is or should be." I am in alignment at the level of the idea of a painting as a system, which derives from the sheer being-an-object that a painting has/is. You see that, and already the painting is a system. That's the case for both him and me, but the two of us get from this A to B in two different ways. For him, a painting is an object, therefore it has a material history, and therefore the system that the painting is is that of its material history. For me, on the other hand, a painting is an object, and therefore it has uncountably many perceptible attributes of which the fabbro-painter is in partial but avowable (thrown-projection-type) control, and

therefore the system that the painting is is that of the determined and then perceived relations among its attributes, amounting, in the case of success, to an interlocked (crystalline) active balance. ("Active" in that it's not completely inert, not completely static, not completely hermetic, not completely closed; hence—I've been thinking about this very much recently—there is one (composite) dimension, ultimately, along which any artwork with attained active balance is, ultimately, centrifugal (is this the right word? I feel there's a better one that's escaping me: like as though it has stepped in one decisive direction from its center; it has angular momentum, directional orbit, even in (and, precisely, from within, due to) all its cross-checks and mutual-balancings. It has a lean in one particular direction. And that direction—it is the painter's highest responsibility, as a person—ought to be that which furthers Love; this is a situated act, contingent upon the painter-person's situation, and hence requiring an (accurate) avowed reading of "the world," because it is only with respect to a specified appraisal of what constitutes good-in-the-world (Caritas, Love, agape*) that a painting's sole centripetality can be determined to be a good or a bad one. (* The Love in question here is agapic because, being a matter of the sole active dimension / direction onto which the painter-person's entire moral responsibility as a worldly actor is transferred / deposited / deferred / concentrated (I would say "sublimated" but it is crucially not without residue; the residue is the painting, and it is this residue which is all-important), being, in other words, a matter of the totality of what the painter-person's extrapersonal registration of personal life amounts to, it is truly the act of ultimate self-sacrifice-for-the-other / self-giving-for-You (my Buberian / Levinasian language, the capitalized pronoun or the "autrui," does not fail to rankle, but I am not yet up to the standards of Nancy's excruciating but necessary improvement upon it).

Curiosity: "He seeks answers through repetition, returning again and again to these series marked by minor variations on narrowly defined visual themes. He often shows them together: it's as if each new series must be accompanied by the last to exhaust its function." Reminds me of Grotjahn. And: "I realized, when I started traveling around and looking at things and going on eBay in the late 1990s, and looking at other weird auction aggregators since then, that there are just hundreds of thousands of paintings—probably more—probably millions of paintings for sale at all times from different people in the world. And so, as a game, I started bidding on some paintings. I started choosing them intuitively, based on my own network of understanding of painting. And so I started putting in low bids, bottom-feeder bids, like 50 euros on a painting, and if I would win it, I would have shippers pick it up and then wait for others to join it, and then have them shipped to me. It was a strange way of collecting art but it didn't really cost anything. The artists were dead, a lot of them, because the paintings were older, and the styles usually paralleled other [contemporaneous] styles." And, strangely given that he's a CAS client: "The idea of a blank canvas is something I'm not crazy about, and it was nice to have something to react to." And: Who are these "lot of people"? "I see a lot of people who are throwing paint around in abstract ways, and their paint drips and drops in bright colors, and I don't think they're painters, because it's not relevant. So part of me thinks a painter is somebody who's making relevant artwork with paint. And if that's the case, I'm a painter." One more point of curiosity: who are the super bright painters? "I'm not going to copy what's happening, but it definitely influences what I want to say. And I have noticed that in periods where super bright painting is happening, I'll make some. I do kind of consider them like decoys. I can use these trends as camouflage a little bit, where I'm kind of going undercover. It allows me to extend the system of what I feel like I can activate if that aesthetic is in play at the same time."

Quite curious about this “bohemian” origin for total nudity. Extraordinarily relevant for my spa town. Whereabouts precisely? “By about 1310, we see four motifs evolving concurrently. First of these is a gradual move toward total nudity. As early as the mid-14th century—notably in French and Bohemian painting (Figs. 30, 31) —Christ can appear wholly nude. Thereafter, the Child's nakedness is a legitimate option, both north and south of the Alps” (30). The cited examples are in Prague, currently, but the figures section doesn’t say where they’re from.

From the “Reena Spaulings” Wikipedia, this part reminds me of the book excerpted as the press release for Caguiat’s first show (as far as I’m aware), at 15 Orient, “The Empire City” by Paul Goodman:
“Chapter 9 The unnamed narrator, male in form this time, meets Reena in a pipe system beneath the city where both met with gossip and rumours. In a drug-like trip, the two characters are flushed into an open field where they become sick and engage in a series of long, drawn-out sexual encounters. The narrator compares Reena to a city, saying that there is no singular idea of the city as the city reproduces itself multiple times based on inter-personal experiences. Reena and the narrator drive through the city, admiring the new lighting systems. The two meet on a bed, and the narrator leaves the room as Reena smashes a glass against the wall.”
All in all it sounds like a better version of the Calla Henkel books I looked through (not that those seemed bad; this just seems really quite good, reminding me of writing, mostly in Heavy Traffic, by Laszlo Horvath, Saoirse Bertram, and Zans Krohn).
Other fragments of probably obvious interest to me:
“After Spaulings leaves the museum, Rain criticizes their “homeless” ensemble and Jenny fantasizes about them kissing on a ski lift, calling Spaulings the “most cool girl in the world”.” I like this blatant manufacturing of allure, out of thin air, with the means so bare, so exposed, as to attain that (likely belabored) nonchalance which is now Reena Spaulings’s trademark.
“Reena starts dancing with a "god" like man, a model in which she describes as beautiful but extremely intoxicated. Spaulings dances with the man and party goer Maris burns Reena with her cigarette for no reason. Maris cools down Reena's burn with an ice cube from her drink, apologizing for her erratic behavior.” “A “god” like man.”
This is nice and reminds me of what, aged 17, I read into “sunflower in the evening / standing in the garden / taking up that space.” “Chapter 15 Reena meditates on her body's being, comparing the forms and identities to the flickering and mixing of flames. The narrator describes Reena and

her interactions with individuals in the city, including a man looking for the subway station. All individuals share a common connection - an ability to share spaces and take up space within the entity of the city scape."
This is what reminded me of Krohn's "My Boyfriend." "Chapter 8 In a restaurant, Reena introduces her lover and he waits tables. She describes his destructive, existential behaviour in detail while recalling his sex habits as they have slept together. Reena describes his hair as grass-like and messy, making her both turned off and attracted to him at the same time. She remembers watching him on the beach, undressing and observing his masculine behaviour."

Rediscovered this mural from the outside of Cafe Brazil on Central Expwy. in Dallas; this place sits alongside Zaguán in the deepest crevice of my summer heart. Each has a glowing memory attached; Zaguán the only interview I ever felt went well (I still recall speaking of Faulkner's Nobel speech, which, incidentally, Dr. Pruit would use in an email to me which is still one of the most cherished messages I've ever received), Café Brazil a visit ca. 3a.m. on maybe the first night I ever went out with Lauren, probably with M.E., Shelby, Greta, Lindsey, probably the same night I had to get out of Lauren's bed (Lauren was in Greta's, if I recall) because of a fire drill.

I took this photo when we went back there with Harry, in July 2023.

Yesterday, I finally finished sorting my trobata according to this schema: Painting carta

I’m not sure whether it worked, because the documents I sorted them into total 1,494 pages (285+109+167+155+240+46+66+41+57+141+66+121).
This doesn’t feel much more tractable than what I had before, even though I’ve undeniably done much work.

A few days ago, I got excruciatingly sad, because I was annoyed at the only picture I was able to produce whenever people compel me to show an image of a painting, so I dug up pictures of paintings I like better than that one, and in finding them, I found them to be enmeshed among images--so much de Kooning, Mesopotamian figures, Schutz, Judd, Ashtary--that, I broke my heart in admitting to myself, are quite simply much better than the totality of what fills my mind routinely today. A glimpse of what I’m talking about:

And I feel I am waste, the intervening twelve months (these are from April, devastatingly even longer ago than I would have guessed) waste, those months having come at higher cost, pound for pound, than any other stretch of my life, all for nothing. I am faced with the fact of having heartbreakingly less, now, than I should.

21 April 2025

I don’t think I’ve said this yet, but I think I can tell from the documentation that I’d be overwhelmed by the paintings of Osama Al Rayyan, who has an exhibition now at Francis Irv.

My first day in New York is the last day they’re up!

In other recent online-painting news: the following Tatol reviews have aligned tightly with my tastes:

[Davies is a 2022 Bard graduate who has made a comment in an interview, “I don’t make really polished things that conceal the decisions. I don’t like to conceal my decisions… There’s so little in them. I like to make it out of as few marks as possible, always. That’s something I always keep in the back of my mind… I like paintings that are concise. And I paint my best when I’m telling myself that. It’s like walking on a tightrope,” that stings my heart because it reminds me that my Pink Angels (Study for a re-Symbolist painting) is the only really good painting I’ve ever made.] Harry Davies - Drainaage - Ulrik - ***.5 The effect Davies is working with is very much in line with late Bacon landscape works, like the Jet of Water that was in Peter Doig's Gagosian group show at the end of last year. The pipe implies a flow or vector of motion, a figurative shape for an abstract force, and as such it works directly on the level of form and activity on the canvas instead of getting gummed up by the usual game of shuffling references and signifiers. I mean, I started with a reference, and there's a more than superficial resemblance to Bacon in paintings like Standpipe Valve Replacementand Housing. But my point is that there's a clear intention of effect behind the work that most painters self-consciously groping for a "personal style" can't get to; he's not trying to copy Bacon, he has an approach that creates a representation of force through paint. That's not at all a unique quality since painting has always

dealt with the illusion of movement, but there's a rare focus in the neither-representational-nor-abstract capture of elemental qualities on canvas that Bacon managed with great sophistication and Davies is doing pretty successfully in his better pieces. I enjoy the effect but all the same, like a lot of decent painting I've seen recently, it ultimately distinguishes itself by avoiding the traps of more well-worn stylistic decisions. Something to get really excited about is a more elusive specter.

Enzo Shalom - Bortolami - ***.5 Here we have another method of attempting to surmount the problem of contemporary painting: a cool, restrained tentativeness that tries to hide its uncertainty behind the procedural. You can almost see the fear and trembling in the little self-conscious marks and the shapes that I'm sure have been arrived at through technical processes that outsource composition, and the effect is something like applying Krebber's cultivated impotence to Johns's intellectual negations instead of Krebber's own ironized expressionism. To be clear, this is all a good thing. It's actually pretty great inasmuch that it reflects the real impasses of contemporary painting and the agonizing effort to avoid the traps of contrivance that lie in every direction. More importantly, that refusal to make a wrong step has led to an austere refinement of his approach, and everything looks correct in its aloofness. In part this is just painting that's very much up my alley, I can't rightfully call it groundbreaking or powerful and I know Johnsian severity isn't everyone's ideal. Like McMillan, although these stand out in relation to how utterly uninspired most contemporary painting is, they're not quite the keys to the kingdom.

On this day, at work, I noted “Hayeelin dur-dur band,” “Let’s get lost (Chet Baker?),” “Dansk XP shoe” (Alec was wearing it, and I liked it and talked to him about it), and “I want to, during work, in chunks, have read to myself the whole “re-Symbolism” linearized document, to resurrect my last summer’s angle on Mondrian, Ashtary, de Kooning, Grotjahn, Stein, and Klimt,” and “I need: more ultrafines, linseed, paperclips, file folders?”

22 April 2025

[At 7:59 a.m., contorted into this perverse timing by my floundering attempts to salvage thought-space from this new life-arrangement I’ve desperately sought for the better part of a year, I noted:]
Swann’s way’s 58th chapter, with the foliage and the meditation on faith (be it aesthetic, it makes no difference, not for him), is, maybe, the crowning jewel of at least this first volume.
[One hour later, in traffic:]
CUNY prof mentions maronnier scent, panier de framboises, and sprig of tarragon, and the passage from each to the next by synecdochalization-stages whereby nothing is lost—that is an

indispensable mechanism for the greater urgos (transmogrification: Proust resembles Rilke's bon dieu who resembled Schultz's alchemist "philosopher" and, in a way that is perhaps only now orthodoxically possible, resembled also the (formerly gnostic) demiurge) of redemption.
CUNY prof also with insight on the musicality of the whole recherche: structure of correspondances or, perhaps more precisely, internal resonances that by and by give rise to the emergent total harmony.

[At work, listening to an essay from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's collection Activation of Energy (prompted by Harry's finding it in a bookstore in Burlington, VT, and sending a picture to me), I noted:]

Chardin:

Pleiad-? [I.e., what is the meaning of "Pleiades" here? I was dazzled-pleased by being reminded of what Harry once explained to me as the theory of "Pleiadians," interstellar beings among us who speak in their "light language," as in tongues. "The truth is that if we examine our own substance closely we are amazed (Text sourced from https://www.organism.earth/library/document/atomism-of-spirit) at the reappearance, once again, of the abyss in a new form. It is no longer the abyss of fragmentation nor, at the other extreme, the abyss of agglomeration. It lies in a third direction, and it is the abyss of synthesis—the mesmeric depths of a matter which, at a minimum volume, contrives limitlessly to build up on itself at the very heart of our own selves. [Just here I am reminded, deeply, of the most important thought I had in 2019-2020 regarding contemporary cognitive science's gross error in making a jump to a computational regime of analysis when, really, the organic "substrate" (I don't think, anymore, that it can be called that) of personal thought may have, deep in its microstructure, the means to "encode" (another failure of a word) thought by means of infinitesimal gradations of position, quite literally boundlessly varied, and therefore open unto infinite variety no matter whether they can in fact recombine in boundlessly large chains.] / If, then, we look at this rising whirlpool from which our thought emerges; if we reflect upon this third abyss, we can, I believe, begin to see the universe falling into shape and settling into equilibrium around the human Pleiades."
"Its very shape": Caguiat [What I was noting: In this passage, and culminating at the words "its very shape," my mind was filled with Justin Caguiat's paint-world; I tried, once, in a painting half-finished, to take the microbeings Clavaud drew, and to inhabit them a panel; I have since hesitated to invoke the inevitably-associated signifier-world, but, for at least a shining moment, reading Teilhard, I wanted to do it all again and forever. "And at this point there appears a single curve which expresses the progress of one and the same physico-biological process: noögenesis. / Let us follow the phases of the phenomenon more closely. / At the lower stages, when low molecular weights are involved, there is hardly any folding-back of matter upon itself, and in consequence the effects of consciousness can still not be observed in it; they are as impossible for us to apprehend experientially as are the variations of mass that occur in our bodies when we are in motion, were it only an aircraft travelling at maximum speed. At a higher stage, however, approaching molecular weights of several millions (in the case of the viruses, shall we say?) the differences between the inorganic and the organic begin to loom up. It is at

this point that the ‘centric’ properties of matter begin to become apparent. When (Text sourced from https://www.organism.earth/library/document/atomism-of-spirit) we reach the cell (and to do so, I suggest, we pass through a critical point) these properties have definitely emerged, and we feel that we are moving into a different world. However, even if the cell, by reason of its increased dimensions, can use in its construction methods of interconnexion (capillarity, osmosis, corpuscular chains) which are denied to small atomic assemblies, it is surely evident that it still belongs at least as much to the world of atoms as to the world of living beings—and this in view of its behaviour, its initial smallness, its condition of existing ‘in myriads,’ and its very shape: and so—once the threshold has been crossed—the process continues logically, stage by stage, up to the higher living beings and then up to and including man.”]
Connect that Nancy essay [“Human Excess” from Being Singular Plural, which I just yesterday sent to Harry in this connection] to the second essay here [to, that is, “Atomism of Spirit”]
“Incandescent bodies”: personal bodies, or stars / globes? “Astral”? [“So long as it is a question of disintegrated and incandescent bodies, we can succeed in penetrating the secrets of astral life. By contrast, when we are confronted with large complexes which are obscure by nature, we are still as helpless as ever. Since, in all the vast expanse of the heavens, the earth is still the only speck on which we can follow the moleculization of matter into its upper limits, we can find no term of comparison outside the earth to give us information about the limit of the phenomenon. We know today how stars are born and die; but if we are to form an idea of the way in which a planet comes to an end biologically, we are obliged to venture into the hazards of an extrapolation.”]
“Other spirits it has met”: it seems in his language (with what immediately proceeds) that extraterrestrials are functionally equivalent to angels or Jesus. [“... the conjunction of thinking stellar units would allow moleculization to get off to a fresh start; the end of the process would be postponed to a higher stage. However, while the problem of death would momentarily have been dismissed, it would reappear at this higher degree of complexity with even greater urgency. And it is precisely this shadow of a death (even were it still thousands of millions of years away) that we must now and for ever banish from our horizon, if we are to be able to continue to act ever more consciously. / What way out, then, can we find? / The more I study these prospects the more I am convinced that the only way in which the spirit of the earth can come to an end without perishing, is by disappearing in depth through excess of centration upon itself—whether it does this alone or with the support of other spirits it has met during its journeying.”].

[At work, I noted:]
Certain horizontal ellipses, on the Blumengarten or otherwise, can be either doorknobs (the metal ones, from front door and bath cabinet doors) or (new Alibaba) espresso cups. Shall I just paint the reflectivity? Shall I Manet-“deux bocks” it [paint its crystalline light-play with the same hand with which Manet achieved that of the bière in the café-concert painting in the National Gallery, not the more famous one in the Courtauld]? Shall I colle any of this privacy film [that we got from Nala]? [I hesitate on this last; therein lies kitsch-danger. But I think there is hope. It must be tried; but, if tried, how can I know for sure whether a trash-pasting reading will ever surface? I

want the opposite of this; I want the frisson-allure of oil-on-wood up against aluminum, neoprene, PVC, mylar.]

[Driving home:]

Marionette theater: Alike to Teilhard in the "last stage of man" / "tree of knowledge" thing ["It appeared, he responded sharply, taking a pinch of snuff, that I had not read the third chapter of the first book of Moses attentively; and anyone who did not know this first stage of all human culture, with such a person one could not reasonably talk about the following stages, and how much less about the last." And: "Look at the young F..., when he, as Paris, stands among the three goddesses and hands the apple to Venus: his soul even finds itself (it is a horror to see) in his elbow. / Such deficiencies, he added in finishing his point, have been unavoidable ever since we ate of the Tree of Knowledge. Well, paradise is barred and the cherub behind us; and we have to journey around the world to see whether there is perhaps some way in again on the other side." And, at the very end: "Consequently, I said a little absent-mindedly, we should have to partake once again of the Tree of Knowledge in order to fall back into a state of innocence? / Precisely so, he replied; that is the last chapter of the history of the world."];
The mathematics—infinity, asymptotes—seems actually watertight and useful, as a figure ["Not at all, he answered. The movements of the operator's fingers relate to the movement of the puppets to which they are attached in rather a much more artful way, somewhat as numbers are attached to their logarithms or the asymptote to the hyperbola." And, right before the very end: "Now, my excellent friend, said Herr C..., you are in possession of everything you need to know to understand my point. We see that the extent to which, as in the organic world, thought becomes dimmer and weaker, the grace within it emerges ever brighter and more powerful. Indeed just as when the intersection of two lines, on the one side of a point, after passing through infinity, suddenly presents itself again on the other side, or the image made by a concave mirror, after disappearing into infinity, suddenly reappears complete before us; so, when knowledge has, as it were, passed through an infinity, grace returns; and in such a manner, that it, simultaneously, appears most purely in that form of the human body that has either absolutely none, or infinite consciousness; that is to say, either in the form of a manikin, or a god."];
"Elf" / "elves" / the gravity stuff ["What's more, he declared, these puppets have the advantage that they are antigrav. They know nothing of the inertia of matter, that most contrary of all physical properties as far as dance is concerned: because the force that raises them into the air is greater than that which keeps them chained to the ground. What would our good G...give, were she sixty pounds lighter, or when such a weight would come to her aid during her entrechats and pirouettes! Puppets, like elves, need the floor only in order to skim it, so as to give new vigour to their limbs by its momentary resistance; we need the floor to rest on and recover from the strain of the dance; an instant that itself is clearly not dance and with which there is nothing more to do than to have it, as far as possible, disappear."]— down the line, if, like that painter I learned of yesterday [Harry Davies, about whom more below], I want to charge motion (that of a cartoon, that of a puppet) into my paintings (to later balance it in a checked whole, of course)
"Both ends of the ring-shaped world": Brilliant! And Nancyean, and Teilhardian ["He countered

that it was simply impossible for human beings even to attain the same level of grace as a manikin. Only a god could match matter in this area; for here the point was reached where both ends of the ring-shaped world came to grips with one another."]

He calls the play of marionettes a "variant of the art of dance invented for the rabble": on Greenberg's account, would it be a folk art or kitsch? (Does it matter? How does this piece's crux, achieved in the last two parts, affect this calculus?)

The thing about "elliptical" (about human and marionette motions, centers of gravity and pendula) seems to me very worth pursuing, especially if this piece is to mediate my finding of, or open up my treatment of, the problematizataion-at-the-vanishing-point of the (Eden-related) personal and the (craft-mediated, NOT algorithmic but still putting into active (even if negated) play the same generative principle which in algorithmic mechanism is carried to an extreme point with apocalyptic stakes) mechanical.

Portion, flexibility, agility: this list is said to be found at a certain elevation, in the marionette Theatre: and in my paintings? It is by means of Ren & Stimpy, derived figures that I will first put them into play on my panel surfaces, but these same three – Proportion, flexibility, agility – need not remain limited to strictly cartoon derived figures. Indeed, they could be considered to be the very vitality of any element of a painting, put into authentically, active tension: any form, any material detail, which is authentically active – it might be that it has these three, proportion, flexibility, agility. And is this not energy itself? Energy being Teilhard's word for what I have called by a different name, namely, caffeine, desire, etc..

On Clement Greenberg's "Avant-garde and Kitsch":

I think his argument for this distinction is useful insofar as his "kitsch" category aligns with Debord-Nancy's "spectacle," which is, I think, unexpectedly, a significant alignment.

23 April 2025

After the YHWH Nailgun show at the Echo I met a musician, Colin, who releases music under the name "manisfey"; I cannot find it. I talked to him about "fey" sounding Shakespearean to me; he said he got it from Nabokov, and I told him how devoted to Shakespeare Nabokov was, and told him about Pale Fire, and tried to convince him to read it. He seemed enthusiastic. He lives in the Gaylord.

24 April 2025

[On the way to work, I noted these points of Apollinaire's "Zone":
Citronniers, poissons algues ["Maintenant tu es au bord de la Méditerranée / Sous les citronniers qui sont en fleur toute l'année / … / Nous regardons avec effroi les poulpes des profondeurs / Et parmi les algues nagent les poissons images du Sauveur"];
Amsterdam, laide ["Te voici à Amsterdam avec une jeune fille que tu trouves belle et qui est laide / Elle doit se marier avec un étudiant de Leyde / On y loue des chambres en latin Cubicula locanda"];
Auberge, Prague ["Tu es dans le jardin d'une auberge aux environs de Prague / Tu te sens tout heureux une rose est sur la table"];
Religion simple ["La religion seule est restée toute neuve la religion / Est restée simple comme les hangars de Port-Aviation"];
À 20 et 30 ans ["Tu as fait de douloureux et de joyeux voyages / Avant de t'apercevoir du mensonge et de l'âge / Tu as souffert de l'amour à vingt et à trente ans / J'ai vécu comme un fou et j'ai perdu mon temps"];
L'amour dont je souffre [just this line, its suppleness, its acuteness]
Les laitiers ["Tu es seul le matin va venir / Les laitiers font tinter leurs bidons dans les rues"]
Christs a notre forme / christs inferierieurs [The very end: "Et tu bois cet alcool brûlant comme ta vie / Ta vie que tu bois comme une eau-de-vie / Tu marches vers Auteuil tu veux aller chez toi à pied / Dormir parmi tes fétiches d'Océanie et de Guinée / Ils sont des Christ d'une autre forme et d'une autre croyance / Ce sont les Christ inférieurs des obscures espérance //Adieu Adieu // Soleil cou coupé"]

Horse dealer: perfect stand in for Art dealer; but is a groom a good stand in for an artist? Mostly, anyway, I just like the shadow of Michael K. in the figure of the horse dealer. And Kleist went out of his way to name him, in Homeric-epic fashion, "the horse dealer," conspicuously often, in place of his name.

"Abend" (kaffe abend / vice versa, which was it?) : An afternoon transfigured by simply being named in German (or even by simply being named): like a snack, by being called mezè; and, an "abend" is something completely different from an "après-midi," etc.
[There is something, by the way, I add ten days later, with a certain character quite close to that of "kaffe abend," in the twenty-first chapter of the gospel of John, with its mention of "breakfast" ("When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread. / Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you just caught." / So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large fish. Even though there were so

many, the net was not torn. / Jesus said to them, ‘Come, have breakfast’”).]
[I may have invented the “kaffe”; I tried to find what I remembered, but this is the closest thing to it.]

Notes from Le souffleur:
In a flashing fragment, I caught a glimpse of my (inelegantly-named) “baby-vision”: “...—he who, at all costs, wished to remake the gaze of a child!”
And, in another flashing fragment, I caught a glimpse of Jesus: “From then on you are built on my account, K., you who have remained attached to him, insensibly! I am only a glance of him —...”

I learned after work, from Joe, during the “open shop” time, that if I want wood bigger than the scraps they have, they can sell it to me at wholesale price, $15.78 for 1/8 in Baltic birch ply, $30 ish for 1/4 in Baltic birch, each for a 5 x 5 sheet.

I learned also that they made the surfaces--the hexagons without a horizontal line of symmetry--for the Hockney series that included the blue porch which obsessed me in December or January of 2020-21.

25 April 2025

Foucault’s “The Prose of Actaeon” (included in a The Baphomet translation) is luminous indeed; it helps me to hold onto Klossowski in terms more tractable, specific, productive than what I had,

which was, roughly, a sense of his purely impure charge, held in an insistent intensity of a low hum, somehow cruxing Sade and Niche at an “end” (which may be but a where-we-really-are-now, i.e. just an authentic “latest”) of le Christianisme, just as is Nancy’s “déclosion”—not an alternative to Christianity, but rather a deeper-into; a boring-through rather than a sidestep.

“Tam dira cupido. It is this desire which the goddess placed in Actaeon's heart at the moment of metamorphosis and death: if you can describe the nudity of Diana, you are welcome to do so. / Klossowski's language is the prose of Actaeon: the transgressive word. Is not every word so, when it must deal with silence? Gide and many others with him wanted to transcribe an impure silence into a pure language, no doubt not seeing that such a word only possesses its silence from a much deeper silence that it does not name and which speaks in it and in spite of it —thus rendering it confused and impure. We now know, thanks to Bataille and Blanchot, that language owes its power of transgression to an inverse relationship, that existing between an impure word and a pure silence, and that it is in the indefinitely travelled space of this impurity that the word may address such a silence. For Bataille, writing is a consecration undone: a transubstantiation ritualized in reverse where real presence becomes again a recumbent body and finds. itself led back to silence in an act of vomiting.

Blanchot's language addresses death: not in order to triumph over it in words of glory, but so as to remain in that orphic dimension where song, made possible and necessary by death, can never look at death face to face nor render it visible: thus he speaks to it and of it in an impossibility that relegates him to an infinity of murmurs. / Klossowski knows these forms of transgression well. But he recaptures them in a movement that is entirely his own: he treats his own language like a simulacrum. …”

“The Roberte trilogy is treated differently, at least in appearance-journal fragments, scenes with dialogues, long exchanges that seem to tilt the word toward the currency of an immediate language without overview. But among these three texts a complex relationship is established. Roberte ce Soir already exists inside the text itself, since the text recounts Roberte's decision of reproof against one of the novel's episodes. But this first narrative also exists in the second, which contests it from within through Roberte's journal, and later in the third, where one sees its theatrical representation being prepared, a representation which escapes into the very text of the Souffleur, where Roberte, called upon to give life to Roberte through her identical presence, splits apart into an irreducible gap. At the same time, the narrator of the first story, Antoine, breaks up, in the second, between Roberte and Octave, then is scattered in the multiplicity of the Souffleur, where the one speaking is, without one's being able to determine for certain, either Théodore Lacase or K., his double— who passes himself off as him, wants to take credit for his books and finally finds himself in his place—or even the Old Man, who presides over the shuntings and remains the invisible "breather" (Souffleur) of all this language. A breather already dead, breather and breathed-perhaps Octave speaking yet again beyond death? / It's neither the ones nor the others, probably, but rather this overlapping of voices that "breathe" one another, insinuating their words into the other's speech and animating him with a movement, a "pneuma" that is not his own-but also breathing in the sense of a breath, an expiration that extinguishes the light of a candle; and lastly breathing (soufflant) in the specifically French sense of cheating or trickery, where one seizes upon something destined for another (taking his place, his role, his situation, his wife). Thus, as Klossowski's language recuperates itself, looming over what it has just said in the swirl of a new narration (and there are three, just as there are three turns in the spiral staircase adorning the cover of Le Souffleur), the speaking subject is dispersed into various

voices that "breathe" and "trick" one another, suggest, extinguish and replace one another-scattering the act of writing and the writer himself into the distance of the simulacrum in which he loses himself, breathes and lives. As a rule, when an author speaks of himself as an author, it is in the vein of the "diaristic" confession that tells of everyday truths-an impure truth in a spare, pure language. In this recovery of his own language, this retreat that inclines toward no intimacy, Klossowski invents a space of the simulacrum that is without doubt the contemporary, but still hidden, place of literature. Klossowski writes a work, one of those rare works which discover: in it, one sees that the existence of literature concerns neither humans nor signs, but this space of the double, this hollow of the simulacrum where Christianity has fallen under the spell of Demon, and where the Greeks once feared the gleaming presence of the gods with their arrows. It is the distance and proximity of the Same where the rest of us, now, encounter our only language."

"In lands transalpine and futures remembered, …."

Thus could begin another of the chapters of my oscillatory "espresso cup" work, which, recall, are always to begin in the chaosmos / matrixial borderspace of "dream" "language" which is not properly a language (not consisting of signs) but rather a phantasmagoria of simulacra such as Foucault constitutes that notion in his "prose of Actaeon" for Klossowski. One of the greatest / deepest senses that I hope will set in, on the far side of all the oscillations, will be that the movement out of and back into the regime of simulacra will be so continuous, so seamless, so ineluctably retraced, bearing always a trace of both previous and subsequent repetitions of the same (the oscillation), that any facile idea of the distinction between the modes of sleep and waking will be blown apart, and out of the resultant rawness (possibility) I will present (again by repeated presentings) my own notion of "an artistic act," the closest prismatic persons can come to what was in times past thought of as the Utterance of a signifying Word by a Subject, which is now seen to bear more resemblance to hesychastic repetitions of the name of God (l'innommable), and to things Harpham talks about in his "aesthetic imperative", than to any familiar notion of speech.

Also note my dreamland (my "lands transalpine") will be brim-full of Malteseness—things actually, in large part, derived from obscure Maltese history and histories of many other transalpine zones (Montaillou, Basque lands, Bohemia, Hungary, Finland, Flanders, Mathieu's imagination of Capetiens, Flaubert's Saint Antoine (in connection with what Klossowski or Foucault has to say about such Christians as that desert hermit, in contact with the demons of a Greek or Egyptian or otherwise pagan past—Mesopotamian? Celtic? Gothic? Slavonic?)

These thoughts being scaffolded by The Baphomet; here are a couple of details that I noted:

This is valuable building-out of the Prospero / alchemist / sorcerer / astrologer / Dana Schutz "Philosopher" / Bon Dieu figure / demiurge that I am ever at work upon, that figures centrally for me, I was lately given cause to remember, already in Ludovic Nemo, who in his first moments has presented a longing after a master (a printmaker, specializing in etching, as it happened). "The latter (who some claimed was German and called Wallhauser, while others claimed was a Sicilian named Fra Sylvano) was versed as much in astrology aS in medicinal

botany, and had won the blind confidence of Madame de Palençay not only through predictions of his own that had come true, but also through operations that demonstrated the efficacy of his knowledge: they said that from afar he was capable of re-creating in the minds of others the image of a person he immersed in sleep; having subjected his pupil to such experiments, he no doubt exercised an irresistible influence over the young Ogier."

The first section of the above (which I reproduce: "... the one of her nephew's two tutors whom she preferred. The first, a Burgundian clergyman and chaplain of Palençay, later asserted that the second had been the cause of all the woe that followed. The latter (who some claimed was German and called Wallhauser, while others claimed was a Sicilian named Fra Sylvano) was versed as much in astrology as in medicinal botany …") is separately useful to me because it reminds me of, and furnishes luminous referents for, the floating nature (always from elsewhere, perhaps in some sense exiled) of sages in this world of hermits and of Kells-knowledge confined (albeit porously) to precious scriptoria. The person of Barlaam of Calabria, be his positions what they were, furnishes another. And all of this furthers my notion of Malteseness.

I want to retain the figure (or topos) of backgammon, and its archaic French proto-form, and in particular whatever board game appears in that one Baugin. Prompted by this: "At the beginning of the week, they began, the said Brother de Malvoisie and Brother Lahire de Champsceaux had met in the refectory of the lay Brethren to play chess, and it soon appeared to the witnesses that, as far as they could follow the exchange between said knights, keeping to the background, the game's stakes were not some prized object or sum of money, but the very person of the young Ogier, Lord of Beauséant, enlisted in the services of Brother Lahire."

"Sylvano was clever enough to dissuade her at first from pursuing such an outcome. 'You must know, Madame,' he said to her, 'that every prophet is always an impostor. Everything he says in a figurative sense will be interpreted to the letter by ambition; that is why refusing to take his words literally makes a prophet of an impostor.'" This reminded me of the climactic gypsy fortune-teller episode of Michael Kohlhaas—the gypsy herself being a (Klossowskian) double, that of the wife, la morte.

I need to maybe give Ludovic a home like Brigge's Ulsgaard; what was that book with the affluent Belgian town of the horses and horse-tranquilizers (and, perhaps, horse-dealers, and an Uncle)?

[It was Amalia Ulman's "My Dog, My Husband, My Son," published in Heavy Traffic; the publication had just given a fragment, "that mysterious mental illness that made her live in the stables of her grandfather's estate in Sint-Martens-Latem for more than a month, living on carrots and ketamine alone," which, lacking even an author name, was all I knew, until, after

days of searching in different ways, I found the full text on Ulman's Substack.

It is to be understood that the above is by way of specifying (giving form to necessary and relevant aspects of) the aristocracy which (following Baudelaire, and perhaps rendered incrementally more specific by Pound's "Renaissance" series of articles and by Mathieu's œuvre--their successes and their misfires, of course) must be made to exist on a new plane. All that pearl- and coral-incrustation which is to be exorcised, the ghosts which need to be blooded in order that they may then be slain, which must be slain so that they can be remembered and lived "after" (because, as now, we are "after" so many things that we are truly "after" nothing at all).

And the estate can be superposed with what I saw and imagined of Howth, united, as Ireland and the Low Countries are, in the former low-lying boggy basin that spanned what is now the North Sea.

Perhaps it is that the Ongle-Oncle be a pretext for the gun (as in Godard's "a girl and a gun"). The gun is to be ca. 70s cold-war proxy-conflict, or some such, such as one might imagine in a Fassbinder movie (does he have any with a gun?), but in any case not to align with other time-signifying trappings.

(Under all this, see certain of my Malte Laurids Brigge clippings)

This bit made me think that, perhaps, at least on this imagined-lost backplane, this dreamworld of simulacra, it may be worthwhile to make simulacra-correlatives of certain painter figures who plot out the lights of my re-Symbolism, and to shroud them, like this, behind layers of remove, but nevertheless to infuse them with real blood that really does flow in my desires. "Opposite him was the place of Miss Mathilde Brahe. She was a person of uncertain age, a distant cousin of my mother's; nothing was known of her beyond the fact that she kept up a very lively correspondence with an Austrian spiritualist, who called himself Baron Nolde and to whom she was so completely submissive that she would not undertake the slightest thing without first soliciting his consent, or rather, something like his benediction" (32). So that a Nolde (or whoever have you) can be obscured behind a semi-altered name, and made an absent but relevant acquaintance of a tangential kin of indeterminate relation to my hallucinated "I."

In this, something of the same fundamental attachment of a glass of wine to a remembered wife (une morte) which charged a scene that stayed with me, that of the Baugin-correlative, in Tous les matins du monde: "And then Christine Brahe passed by, slowly, like a sick per-son, step by step, through indescribable silence, into which there rang only a single whimpering sound as of an old dog. But at that, to the left of the huge silver swan filled with narcissus, the old man's great mask thrust forward with its grey smile. He raised his wine-glass to my father. And then I saw how my father, just as Christine Brahe passed behind his chair, reached for his glass and lifted it, like something very heavy, a hands-breadth above the table. / And that same night we left" (40).

This reminds me of the type of thing you can do only with puppet plays (betraying Rilke's lifelong interest therein), or with cartoons (I hope ardently to be able to make it to Dustin Hodges at 15 Orient this weekend). "His brown, old, spotted visage turned from one to another, his mouth hung open and his tongue writhed behind his decayed teeth; then all at once this face was gone, and his grey head lay on the table, and his arms lay over it and under it as if in pieces, and from somewhere a withered, speckled hand emerged and trembled" (39-40).

Attach this to the other note (made, along with some others, in clipping-image only*) about dogs, and observe how their behavior is as solemnly ritualistic, as distilledly gestural (in the

incantatory-adjacent sense thereof) as all the others by which Rilke made himself unique among voices since Mesopotamia, or at least since Patmos. "So now he lay there, and one might think that he had died. / The dogs, as it slowly began to grow dark, had one after the other squeezed through the crack in the door. Only the rubican setter with the sullen face sat beside his master, and one of his broad, tufted forepaws lay on Christoph Detley's big, grey hand" (20).

[* I paste all these clippings below:]

“But the dogs especially seemed to find their sojourn in a room where everything had a smell uncommonly exciting. The tall, lean Russian wolfhounds ran busily back and forth behind the armchairs, crossed the apartment in long dance-steps with a swinging movement, reared like heraldic animals, and looked, resting their slender paws on the white-and-gold window-sill, with tense pointed faces and backdrawn foreheads, to right and left out into the courtyard. Small glove-yellow dachshunds sat in the large silk-upholstered easy-chair near the window, looking as though everything were quite in order, and a sullen-looking rubican setter rubbed his back along the edge of a gilt-legged table, causing the Sèvres cups on its painted tray to tremble.”

“And when I think of the others whom I have seen or about whom I have heard: it is always the same. They all have had a death of their own. Those men who carried theirs inside their armor, within, like a prisoner; those women who grew very old and small, and then on a huge bed, as on a stage, before the whole family, the household and the dogs, passed away in discreet and seigniorial dignity. Even the children, and the very little ones at that, did not die just any child's death; they pulled themselves together and died that which they already were, and that which they would have become. / And what a melancholy beauty it gave to women when they were pregnant and stood there, and in their big bodies, upon which their slender hands instinctively rested, were two fruits: a child and a death. Did not the dense, almost nourishing smile on their quite vacant faces come from their sometimes thinking that both were growing?”

“For verses are not, as people imagine, simply feelings (those one has early enough),— they are experiences. For the sake of a single verse, one must see many cities, men and things, one must know the animals, one must feel how the birds fly and know the gesture with which the little flowers open in the morning. One must be able to think back to roads in unknown regions, to unexpected meetings and to partings one had long seen coming; to days of childhood that are still unexplained, to parents whom one had to hurt when they brought one some joy and one did not grasp it (it was a joy for someone else); …”

[Uncle, oncle, ongle, troubadours, etc.:] “But all my verses had a different origin; so they are not verses. And when I wrote my drama, how I went astray. Was I an imitator and a fool that I needed a third person to tell of the fate of two human beings who were making things hard for each other? How easily I fell into this trap. And I ought to have known that this third person who pervades all lives and literatures, this ghost of a third person who never was, has no significance and must be disavowed. He is one of the pretexts of Nature who is always endeavoring to divert the attention of men from her deepest secrets. He is the screen behind which a drama unfolds. He is the noise at the threshold of the voiceless silence of a real conflict. One is inclined to think that heretofore they have all found it too difficult to speak of the two concerned. The third, just because he is so unreal, is the easiest part of the undertaking; him they have all been able to manage. From the very beginning of their plays one notices their impatience to arrive at this third person; they can scarcely wait for him. The moment he appears all is well. But how tiresome when he is late. Absolutely nothing can happen without him; everything stops, stands, waits. Yes, and how if this damming and stagnation kept on? What, Sir Dramatist, and you, public that

knows life, what if he were found missing, this popular man-about-town or this arrogant youth, who fits into every marriage like a master-key? What if, for example, the devil had taken him? …"

"My grandfather called them "the family", and I also heard the others use the same term, which was entirely arbitrary. For, although these four persons were distantly related to one another, they in no way belonged together. My uncle, who sat next me, was an old man, on whose hard, burned countenance there were some black spots, the result, as I learned, of an exploded powder-charge; morose and malcontent as he was, he had retired from the army with the rank of major, and now made alchemistic experiments in some region of the manor house unknown to me; was also, as I heard the servants say, in communication with a prison whence once or twice a year corpses were sent him with which he shut himself in night and day, and which he cut up and prepared in some mysterious fashion so that they withstood putrefaction. Opposite him was the place of Miss Mathilde Brahe. She was a person of uncertain age, a distant cousin of my mother's; nothing was known of her beyond the fact that she kept up a very lively correspondence with an Austrian spiritualist, who called himself Baron Nolde and to whom she was so completely submissive that she would not undertake the slightest thing without first soliciting his consent, or rather, something like his benediction. She was at that time exceptionally stout, of a soft, lazy amplitude that looked as if it had been carelessly poured into her loose, light dresses; her movements were tired and undecided, and her eyes watered continually. And yet there was something about her which reminded me of my frail and slender mother. The longer I looked at her, the more I found in her face all those delicate and gentle features which since my mother's death I had never been able rightly to recall …"

"That was when we saw Christine Brahe for the last time. On this occasion Miss Mathilde had also appeared at table; but she was in an unusual mood. As in the first days after our arrival, she talked incessantly with no definite connection and continually mixing herself up, while some physical restlessness compelled her constantly to adjust something about her hair or her dress, -till she unexpectedly jumped up with a shrill wailing cry and disappeared.

At the same moment my glance turned involuntarily to that particular door, and, in fact: Christine Brahe was entering. My neighbor, the major, made a short, violent movement that transmitted itself into my own body, but evidently he no longer had the strength to rise. His brown, old, spotted visage turned from one to another, his mouth hung open and his tongue writhed behind his decayed teeth; then all at once this face was gone, and his grey head lay on the table, and his arms lay over it and under it as if in pieces, and from somewhere a withered, speckled hand emerged and trembled. / And then Christine Brahe passed by, slowly, like a sick per-son, step by step, through indescribable silence, into which there rang only a single whimpering sound as of an old dog. But at that, to the left of the huge silver swan filled with narcissus, the old man's great mask thrust forward with its grey smile. He raised his wine-glass to my father. And then I saw how my father, just as Christine Brahe passed behind his chair, reached for his glass and lifted it, like something very heavy, a hands-breadth above the table. / And that same night we left."

"So now he lay there, and one might think that he had died. The dogs, as it slowly began to grow dark, had one after the other squeezed through the crack in the door. Only the rubican setter with the sullen face sat beside his master, and one of his broad, tufted forepaws lay on Christoph Detlev's big, grey hand."

"How it always horrified me to hear said of a dying person: he could no longer recognize

anybody. Then I would imagine to myself a lonely face that raised itself from pillows and sought, sought for some familiar thing, sought for something once seen, but there was nothing there. If my fear were not so great, I should console myself with the fact that it is not impossible to see everything differently and yet to live. But I am afraid, I am namelessly afraid of this change. I have, indeed, hardly got used yet to this world, which seems good to me. What should I do in another? I would so gladly stay among the significations that have become dear to me; and if anything has to change at all, I would like at least to be allowed to live among dogs, who possess a world akin to our own and the same things. / For a while yet I can write all this down and express it. But there will come a day when my hand will be far from me, and when I bid it write, it will write words I do not mean. The time of that other interpretation will dawn, when not one word will remain upon another, and all meaning will dissolve like clouds and fall down like rain. Despite my fear I am yet like one standing before something great, and I remember that it was often like that in me before I began to write. But this time I shall be written. I am the impression that will change. Ah, but a little more, and I could understand all this and approve it. Only a step, and my deep misery would be beatitude. But I cannot take that step; I have fallen and cannot pick myself up again, because I am broken. I still believed some help might come. There it lies before me in my own handwriting, what I have prayed, evening after evening. I transcribed it from the books in which I found it, so that it might be very near me, sprung from my hand like something of my own. And now I want to write it once again, kneeling here before my table I want to write it; for in this way I have it longer than when I read it, and every word is sustained and has time to die away. / "Mécontent de tous et mécontent de moi, je voudrais bien me racheter et m'enorgueillir un peu dans le silence et la solitude de la nuit. Ames de ceux que j'ai aimés, âmes de ceux que j' ai chantés, fortifiez-moi, soutenez-moi, éloignez de moi le men-songe et les vapeurs corruptrices du monde; et vous, Seigneur mon Dieu! accordez-moi la grâce de produire quelques beaux vers qui me prouvent à moi-même que je ne suis pas le der-nier des hommes, que je ne suis pas inférieur à ceux que je mé-prise." / "They were children of fools, yea, children of base men: they were viler than the earth. / And now I am their song, yea, I am their byword. . . . / They raise up against me the ways of their destruction. / They mar my path, they set forward my calamity, they have no helper . . . / And now my soul is poured out upon me; the days of affic-tion have taken hold upon me. / My bones are pierced in me in the night seasons: and my sinews take no rest. / By the great force of my disease is my garment changed: it bindeth me about as the collar of my coat … / My bowels boiled and rested not: the days of affliction prevented me … / My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep." /”

“the fear that if I fell asleep I might swallow the piece of coal lying in front of the stove; the fear that some number may begin to grow in my brain until there is no more room for it inside me; the fear that it may be granite I am lying on, grey granite; the fear that I may shout, and that people may come running to my door and finally break it open; the fear that I may betray myself and tell all that I dread; and the fear that I might not be able to say any-thing, because everything is beyond utterance,—and the other fears ... the fears. / I asked for my childhood and it has come back, and I feel that it is just as difficult as it was before, and that it has been useless to grow older.”

Both the Harry Davies text (interview? Application? Rema Hort Mann Foundation) and the Enzo Shalom BR review are sitting, I feel, right in my vein of "just really good painting" (plotted, as a starting point, by my Paradiso terrestre), which is a not insignificant slice of the painting that's being made today. It's a field worth nurturing, worth a constant application of force at its borders, from within, because the delectation of this craft is precisely what I'm here for, it is tenable even in the face of the enormous adverse forces (the turbulences that choke it out, mainly market-related but also having to do with the sheer difficulty of staying in the ecstatic fold of that noble pursuit, a razor-fine line).

This I materialize / specify with the following fragments:

From Davies:

"I want the objects and figures to act upon each other, to feel as if they are cohabiting in a single world, but one which follows an unfamiliar physics. This requires the dissection of an image—to pick it apart and understand how color, space and composition make up a convincing world within the frame—and then a refashioning of its components to make something else" (emphasis mine). I have repeatedly voiced interest, lately, in constituting such a physics of my own. And his dissection sounds like exactly the same kind of fabbro-operation as my trobar, such as I am still trying to practice it.

This reminded me of Warnock's James Bishop: "… I try to take nothing as given. For this reason, I make all of my own paint, spending time with the material degree zero of painting: pigment and binder. I mix wax and turpentine, oil and balsam, and then grind pigments into them. Recently, l've focused on transparency, 2] which has required new inquiries into handling mixing and application - this material study is only just starting to bear fruit, as new methods reveal themselves. I also have experimented at great length with making supports, from open weave linen soaked in rabbit skin glue|3], to velvet|4] to glass 5].

I spend a lot of time with my pallet, mixing paint, wiping it away. I end up with a lot of wasted paint, however I very rarely throw any of it away. I hold onto surplus paint, putting it into jars and mixing it with past color. With time and addition, slowly this accumulation turns into beautiful pinks, greens, browns, greys: unsaturated color which I could never mix again. They become singular colors, the result of process, an unconscious accumulation of past decisions, desires, mistakes, a sort of compost heap of color."

This rings true to my own experience of tending to my trobata: "… so often, it's the flipside of an action, the consequences of a failure that becomes the vital form in a painting. For this

reason, I keep the pieces of shattered attempts around, and seldom throw anything out. This brings me back into relation with past actions as they languish in the accumulated wreckage of past mistakes in the form of bits of collage, paint mixtures, drawings and sometimes entire discarded paintings. It's the scouring of the dustbin of past attractions and actions where epiphanies happen."

Now, on Enzo Shalom:

"The works on view beckon instinctual suggestions of fogged memory, fluctuating senses, and emotional incursions." My memory is always fogged, my emotions always incur.

Here, what the reviewer is introducing is, precisely, a dimension along which Shalom can / does initiate a play of tensile balance: "Some strokes adopt a languid torpidity and others a tensile speed …." This one, in particular, is the very same which I declared an intention to initiate, two days ago, prompted by Kleist's Uber das Marionettentheater (see pending note). And then, later, the reviewer quite directly invokes another such dimension, superposed, coexistent, perhaps mutually exerting orbital or push-pull forces (gravities or pressures) but always isolable (to extend the linear-algebraic terminology, that isolation is the decomposition into basis-vectors): "... raising another tendency toward vacillation, this time between values of opacity and transparency."

"… paintings and the medium's historical load. / To this point, just as quickly as visual cultural references are summoned, such linear assurances step away. This is where the artist's work recalls the distortions and fragility inherent to transposing idioms. That tradition, itself a contingent construct, unbinds at the very moment of its rearticulation. This apparent snapback occurs in one especially elusive/allusive example, an ostensible nod to Picasso's tragicomic harlequin in which a decontextualized fragment of the character's diamond-patterned costume offers an improvisatory structure." What I liked here was not just (near the start) the specific way in which the subject of painting as a medium, with a particular "historical load," was tensed / activated by the reviewer, which felt akin to the specific way that subject is active in my own mind, though perhaps missing a sense of devotion (Giotto's genuflexion) upon which I insist. I also particularly liked this turn of phrase—"a decontextualized fragment … offers an improvisatory structure"—which felt akin to what I said at the start of this note, about working to remain in the fold of this pursuit; that particular work is always an improvisation, as is, really, all work undertaken by prismatic persons, being, as we are, projecting thrownnesses, always liable to the position / direction / angular moment of our thrownness, always employing a rough provisional calculus of these facta / data (things already done, things given to us; even tra-data, things handed down, like the liquid glass in Velázquez's Water-bearer: such always is tra-dition), always under these contingencies to align our projection with our aspiration (with our (beatific) vision).

Both the Davies and the Shalom review texts are sitting, I feel, right in my vein of "just really good painting", which is a not insignificant slice of the painting that's being made today. It's a field worth nurturing, worth a constant application of force at its borders, from within, because the delectation of this craft is precisely what I'm here for, it is tenable even in the face of the enormous choking forces (the turbulences that choke it out, mainly market-related but also having to do with the sheer difficulty of staying in the ecstatic fold of that noble pursuit , a razor-fine line.

Reading a review of a reprint of Ezra Pound's translation of Enrico Pea's Moscardino.

These brief quotations commit me to finding and reading the work: "... Pound's English rendering of Moscardino, particularly in those passages in which the lunatic grandfather reminisces, prepared the way for the great theatre of memory he would enact in the Pisan Cantos four years later. At the same time, the project served to reengage those fertile regions of madness and delirium in Pound's imagination that, from his early Piere Vidal poems through his versions of Sophocles at St. Elizabeths, remain one of the deepest wellsprings of his work. 'When the mind swings by a grass-blade / an ant's forefoot shall save you,' Pound observed in one of the Pisans. At times, when the phantasmagoria of Pea's prose momentarily lifts in order to reveal almost Cézanne-like notations of local landscape, we hear the old miglior fabbro turning out sentences as splendid as any in Joyce: 'Gulls at rest on the sea-water, in little groups, crowds of them further off, others scattered over a sea fanned by a cool northwest wind. Patternless as a field of daisies sprouting in an unbounded meadow. A sea paler than spring grass feathered by so gentle a breeze, petals, blown off, deflowered.' Or (shades of Hardy or Burns?): 'Now it is winter and the hummock is green and the rosebush is a bundle of thorns.'"

But what I made this note to ask, is, is "gonzo Catholic" a label I can avow for myself. "A blend of D'Annunzio's fin de siècle gothic and Verga's primal screams, this family tragedy (or is it black comedy?) sometimes sounds eerily like Flannery O'Connor in Pound's English version — although utterly without O'Connor's gonzo Catholic vision of redemption."

Though you would not know this neither by the image I keep in my head of the imprint of his poems, nor by the one memorized line of "art-theory" which even on its own ranks him among my brightest lights, Reverdy's poems deliver dazzling intensities (and I do not, at least not now, use such language lightly), in a manner as though revealing from within a fold, turning out and therefore making present in such a way that preserves the sense that what was hitherto concealed was never, for all that, far away, nor even blocked of access.

For example, in this pair of stanzae which end "Le cœur tournant" (Ferraille, 1937).

Je t'aime sans jamais t'avoir vue que dans l'ombre
Dans la nuit de mon rêve où seul je peux y voir
Je t'aime et tu n'es pas encore sortie du nombre
Forme mystérieuse qui bouge dans le soir
Car ce que j'aime au fond c'est ce qui passe
Une fois seulement sur ce miroir sans tain
Qui déchire mon cœur et meurt à la surface

Du ciel fermé devant mon désir qui s’éteint

From the John Elderfield essay which is the opening of the catalogue of the 2011 de Kooning retrospective at MoMA:

A quotation, from Elderfield, makes me think newly: “[Greenberg’s] point was simple: "De Kooning strives for synthesis" in two complementary ways. First, "He wants to re-charge advanced painting, which has largely abandoned the illusion of depth and volume, with something of the old power of the sculptural con-tour." Second, "He wants also to make it accommodate bulging, twisting planes like those seen in Tintoretto and Rubens”” (p. 10 of the MoMA retrospective catalogue, 2021 I think).

Here, Elderfield gets at something which may explain, a whole year after the fact, what has so far set my successes apart from my failures: That the successes (which, I knew, if they were successes, were certainly so on de Kooning’s lines) are precisely the ones which were not deficient in their description of space and volume. “Although he knew that [figures and abstractions] were then widely considered antithetical (one reason for the furor over his Woman paintings of the early 19505), they were not so in his practice. Antithetical for him were paintings that described space and volume, like his own, and paintings deficient in these qualities, which he deplored. Although pictorial composition that invoked space and volume had been identified immemorially with the representation of figures and scenes, de Kooning pursued these qualities in both his figures and his abstractions- and initially found them more readily achieved in the latter” (12).

Well, if this isn’t what I incessantly advocate to myself, or try to convince myself to learn how to do, with my trobata. “… de Kooning models an art of assembly. / … We have already seen how he enjoyed working with self-similar forms, recurring at different scales, from one picture to the next; in the mid-1940s, he also began to trace forms more or less precisely from one work to another, creating a shift in scale when he chose a host canvas different in size to the donor canvas, or when he altered the orientation of a form while transplanting it. The result was often a deliberate discontinuity. Special Delivery (1946; plate 37) incorporates a traced copy of another, smaller painting, D (1946; p. 141, fig. 9); Secretary and Night (both 1948; plates 48, 49) are versions of the same composition, one copied upside-down to begin the other, within which separately conceived images shake around as if within a box. In these and similar works, the suggestion of "scaling" -of the coexistence of multiple forms, both similar and different, of extremely varied scale-is very strong. The art historian Stephen Polcari has nicely described such works as "portmanteau" paintings, and this is also a good term for the conception of space that they reveal, for this second and fully realized version of de Kooning's space-making created places of packing and assembly” (14).

[Reading continued 29 April 2025:]

Elderfield quotes from Rilke something I don’t believe I’ve read but which reads perfectly for re-Symbolism, a direct statement of my “tensile harmony”: “It's as if every part were aware of all the others"; and "in this hither and thither of mutual and manifold influence, the interior of the picture vibrates, rises and falls back into itself, and does not have a single unmoving part””

So far, the main thing of greatest use to myself that I've gotten from this essay (with its insistence on the tracing of de Kooning's innovations upon pictorial space) is, basically, a single plane of action available for superposition: Namely, that of surfaces (I almost say planes, but "surfaces" is more mathematically precise here, and avoids confusion with the "planes" of action which are superposed), which bulge and recede and contort. Parallel to, as I've said (I think) twice now, the idea of velocity as another such (Kleistian, marionette-type velocity; or, Harry Davies (is that the pipe painter at Ulrik?) momentum-type velocity; I think I've previously called each of these "motion" but I think "velocity" is, again, more true to the lifted terminology).
But now I get another view, another pair of eyes, made of innervated flesh, available for the donning (this is always what Elderfield is good for) (I feel I've said almost exactly this same sentence before). This pair of eyes sees the canvas as a registration of simultaneous diachronic situations-resolutions, each an action encoding will and spontaneity, mediated (in a dialectical synthesis, maybe) by habit. (The tracing of spontaneity in tension with will, between Greenberg and Rosenberg, can be found on pp. 17-19; their synthesis by habit seems to be Elderfield's contribution, important if apparently obvious (but perhaps it's onlly obvious once it's been spelled out); to me, Elderfield's contribution of an account of habit seems correspondent to Heidegger's account of thrown-projection: all prior existentialism (Sartre, as correspondent to Rosenberg, say) erred if it ignored the truth in the dynamic Heidegger traced just there.
It is incumbent upon the viewer of paintings to look through all these pairs of eyes at once, if he or she aspires to the particular delectational ravishment—the ecstasy, even—that painting has to offer.
I meant to append the place where Elderfield gives me that about which I said "But now I get another view." It is here: "... what in the external world he intended his newly conceived space to capture: "an occurrence," or "an encounter." He meant by these terms the effect of suddenly catching sight of something—while crossing the street quickly, for example, or coming into a room, or glancing out of the window. In 1959, he said he had "got interested in painting that [was] like frozen glimpses," and the following year that "content is a glimpse of something, an encounter like a flash." His continual talk of glimpses, even to calling himself a "slipping glimpser," would become famous" (20).
So what is really new here is the idea that the components of an arrangement in this motion-plane can be individually mimetic. But we are here in pretty abstract territory: It would be hard to explain the working of this mimesis, and the resultant tensile harmony, in a given picture. It's hard to imagine the various ways it might work, anyway, without the conventions by which cartoons denote motion, or the way in which long-exposure photography renders motion, for example.
Following immediately upon the last-quoted section, Elderfield turns to Barthes: ""Is not the most erotic portion of a body where the garment gapes?" asked Roland Barthes. "It is this flash which seduces, or rather: the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance." De Kooning has been called "probably the most libidinal painter America has ever had," and this portion is certainly a part of what he was glimpsing. But it was everything erratic as well as erotic, everything that flashed by, appearing-and-disappearing, that attracted him; everything that could be taken off guard when he allowed himself to be taken off guard. Being specific to the experience of meeting suddenly with what was external to himself: that was the essential thing" (20).
What Barthes provides here is cogent, memorable, worth retaining, and central to things upon which I've insistently dwelt for at least this whole year so far. Also, Barthes—in general, and, in

particular, the Barthes who is quoted here—seems like a likely reference for Nicolas Gabard, whom I was listening to on this morning's flight.

Noting in passing another Gabard reminiscence in this list de Kooning furnishes: "… de Kooning's term "intimate proportions": "the feeling of familiarity you have when you look at somebody's big toe when close to it, or at a crease in a hand or a nose or lips or a necktie" (21).

But if I tried to seize upon this, would I slip into commercial-aesthetic kitsch? And, for that matter, does that Theta painter (Taurins?) currently working with Kiko Kostadinov?

This is getting awfully close to what in Ashtary I sought to immortalize as "espresso-cup," and I am now wondering why (was it just for the colors?) Ashtary always lived directly next to de Kooning in my head (or was it because I understood this?): "The broken stick in the water, an instance of no-environment, is also an allegory of it--a demonstration of how, and according to what, truth "breaks and rents continually." Reality requires interested attention; you have to "open your eyes with your brain." "I see what I see," the artist said, "and if I have no interest in it, I don't see it." On the other hand, "You see. You meet something. That's no-environment. I can see it in this ashtray. There's no difference between [it and] the famous mountain in Tokyo. You experience something ... like this table was in this room and the moon in the universe. I take that for granted." "Whatever I see becomes my shapes and my condition." / "You meet something," he said" (22).

"… painting is conceived as a closed-circuit process of working from the reactions that a canvas in progress produces, and from actively imagining yourself working within the space that it produces. Henri Matisse once spoke of this, saying, 'To give yourself completely to what you're doing while simultaneously watching yourself do it-that's the hardest of all for those who do work by instinct'" (22).

Re-articulations of what I've always called "working in the fold of pursuit" or "provisionally" or as thrown-projection.

"The Cubism that [de Kooninhg] had made his own in the 1940s was built on the Synthetic Cubism that Picasso and Georges Braque had developed after their invention of collage in 1912, a style of juxtaposed and overlapping planes tightly jig-sawed together in an illusion of shallow space. With Excavation and its affiliated compositions, de Kooning created even more precisely calibrated jigsaws. To do so, he went back to the traditional oil-painting method of working from larger to smaller areas, progressively developing an overlay of more detailed forms—only it was not in his painterly hard-wiring to develop this in a homogenous manner" (24-25).

Perhaps, in order to succeed in my goal of tensile harmony, what I need is to go "back to the traditional oil-painting method of working from larger to smaller areas, progressively developing an overlay of more detailed forms" (see immediately above).

Another Gabardesque list: "[David Sylvester] did concede that there is "a radical distinction between the works that show bodies with heads on and the works made up of bits of bodies and bits of heads," because "when any image is topped off by a head, the head becomes a magnet to the viewer."88 It is true that the head is the strongest of such magnets, but precisely for that reason it attracts wherever it is placed, closely followed by isolated mouths, eyes, hands, breasts, crotches, limbs, feet, and shoes" (25).

I'm referring, mainly, to the discriminating inclusion of articles of clothing into these lists, with the presumption that their specifics—those attributes onto which Gabard pours prodigious attention—receive as cultivated, nuanced, and refined a gaze as does any visage.

To which Northern Renaissance paintings does he refer? Nothing comes to mind, really, except

perhaps a couple of Cranachs (faun & family, judgment of Paris). “bodily parts of varying magnetic visual force distributed over the picture surface, a bit like the figures partly visible in the forests of Northern Renaissance paintings” (26)
[Reading continued 4 May 2025:]

A texture-trobatum: “The Venetian approach, initiated by Titian, was to affirm the common materiality of painted canvas, clothing, and bodily surface. Rembrandt took this further when, in the mid-1650s, he began to position his figures frontally, offering the costumed body as a field in parallel to the picture plane. In his Flora (c. 1654; fig. 23), the woman's gaze and gesture turn away from the viewer but her white chemise drops down the surface to form a plane that merges costume, body, and canvas support in and through the act of painting. As the art historian David Rosand has observed, "It is as though the painter, in applying the pigment, was actually brushing the white chemise." The sequence of broad, rough, vertical white strokes shaped an abstracted corporeality of painted cloth …” (32).

Brilliant, on de Kooning and mesopotamian figures: “... the figures in the new paintings have a more elemental but elusive expressiveness, something between untiring wakefulness and uncontrolled amaze-ment. "Like the Mesopotamian idols," the artist said, "they always stand up straight, looking to the sky with this smile, like they were just astonished about the forces of nature, you feel." This is the primal without the liability of the primitive: a frightening and a hilarious sort of cave painting 130 in spirit rather than style, which makes the ideographic figures popular in New York painting in the late 1940s look sentimentally archaic” (32).

29 April 2025

Image of a petit prince -esque figure but drawn in a way that recalls radial line graphs, particularly if pressure were exerted to limit the line’s complexity. Reminiscence of a Theta show and also, I think, of the artist “nadair”: his work, or his tattoo art?

Yes it is nadair asghari, his tattoos more than his paintings but his drawings (preparatory to either) most of all, and the theta show was the “freak like me” one by violet Dennison

[On 2 May 2025 I learned that, in Connecticut, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry asked his friend Denis de Rougemont to pose on his stomach with his feet in the air, because he did not know how to draw his prince in that position without assistance.

]

30 April 2025

Is there some single thread that runs through Chet baker, Jim Morrison, Bryan ferry?

Hôtel de longchamp, etc.: The Paris of “le souffleur” is so distinctive; what hôtel in Los Angeles could have an article written about it by K., what brasserie could (like lipp) have managers with intrigue-knowledge crucial to the plot, etc.?

1 May 2025

The Daniel W. Smith essay in Bloomsbury Living Currency is abundant, precise, and above all, clear. It makes me think, shiningly and for once, that there might be a crystalline onement of all my own thought (“prismatic personhood” etc.) and the traditions that have long fed and enticed it without full subsumption (Deleuze, Nietzsche, etc). Suppôt, phantasm, etc., will be vital footholds/tools, and careful review of the Klossowskian formulae assembled by Smith will be indispensable.

2 May 2025

Learned that CAS is the only Californian shop importing aluminum from PER Belle Arti, who, Peter thinks, must be doing OK on extrusion, but must be making their real killing off L’s; it is because they charge $3 each for these that we run our own in-house fabrication for them

Learned also that Grotjahn, whose 52.5 x 43 in canvas is the one with which I’m being taught to assemble an aluminum stretcher matrix, is currently deriving his dimensions from Rothko works; and I voiced my suspicion that this is because of the quietude that his recent work (the opaque landscapes) have in common with Rothko, and I shared that I found myself googling Mondrian dimensions when I was cutting panels for myself last week.

Top 51 of my living currency: Think of CAS and Grotjahn whose canvas I’m building while reading

(“”)

The Third Man (1949): the first self-conscious faux-noir?

1 May 2025

A day of whatever reckoning I can manage--that is, consolidation of provisional notes from the last seven days, to and from New York and some work days preceding.

This evening I was grateful for each sip of beer that followed upon carefully forked bites of my rainbow trout, which I salted and stuffed with lemons under Bella's assistance, and to which I applied a sauce of my own creation, of Nala's imported butter from "le meilleur ouvrier [this last word translated "cheesemonger"] de France," browned and mixed with cashews, lemon juice, and parsley. These bites, carefully chewed to locate the filamentary bones without crunching them, were perfectly tender, but so loaded with butter--turgid with it, if flaky soaked flesh can be described so--that I would have gradually become nauseous were it not for the refreshingly cold and carbonated lager. As it was, the only effect of such decadent richness--which, spurred by what I noted above as "Klossowski's Paris," I imagined eating in the dining room of the Hôtel de Longchamp--was to dilate my sense of time to a softly psychedelic extent, languid I felt in the eyes, as I looked down at this meal I was eating.
But I ought not dissipate into this what little force de vie I'm left (or is it eau de vie? That thing which is neither caffeine nor desire nor hyle nor the Holy Spirit but rather that which is their intersection: Surely, that intersection is a fluid).

3 May 2025

Evening, as the light drained out of the morning; morning, as the glass drained out of the evening; morning, as the light glowed out of the morning; and these and a dozen other emblemata in measured succession, each inert, indifferently repeated but not indifferently varied,

a scansion sequentializing the accumulation of faculties and first sensoria.
[This really is what happened when, or as, I awoke today.]

I found the Emblamata Andreae Alciati and, reading it, selected these images for their strangeness or harmony.

Baphomet?

I have always said that my mind is a bucket of dirt. (I think the first instance was in the winter of 2019-20. And this was not some kind of simple derogation; there was something about the syntagm that sat deeply true.) But maybe it is that, rather, mind is a bucket of dirt, and particularly so that this may be the case: The most accurate diagram of thought-in-motion I've ever concocted: A carpet of worms, all squirming ahead and lateral in a worm's particular way, all of them over and under and (if they are hungry, or Beckett-Bacon overcrowded, reckless or

frictional) through all sort of others. Initially the figure was earthworms; these turn the stomach, of course; alternatives offer possibly-indispensable resource. There are silk worms, who, if in a carpet, and all weaving, leave a "lossy" registration (the silk, once left, moves, is pulled out of shape of the worm's actual higher-complexity finer-grain path; but this is of course not strictly loss, it is also gain of a new position, a new thrownness), as dripping with significance on the level of analysis of an individual worm as in aggregate (the whole carpet, the whole mind). There are also glow-worms, for the imagination of a registration of whose lines-of-flight you would need an imaginary overhead long-exposure camera; the question is, what is the surface of the carpet? Does the camera which is "consciousness" or "awareness" or "attention" foveate a single point, or foveate different points variably, or somehow register the whole expanse (field-of-view)? And how opaque are these worms (how much light from worms-below does a topmost worm's body block)? I like the idea of foveation and at least some degree of translucency. Because, in the sort of attention which I practice every morning that the opportunity is afforded me (for the notional purpose of my oscillatory work in words), what I am doing is, for once, following an individual worm through its contortions, following as deep into the peat-bog understory as I can, marking its turns, its moves, in so many words. (Even this note is, of course, such a worm, which I've followed, now, as far as I can; every word here is a registration of a move in a sequence of glowworm-moves, the most accurate registration I can manage with words--words which are, I feel safe to say, more like Klossowskian simulacra than anything denotatory, anything semiotically nominal: I've long thought of words this way, less as a parcel of truth than an excrescence of as much trueness as I can muster; I've thought of them like this at least as long as I've been thinking of all my notational acts--that is, all my "artistic" acts, all that I do in what I think of as my capacity as artist--as "micro-encounters," "synapses," etc., registrations of as much truth-to-phenomenon as I can manage, in as tight a scale as this demand requires.)

[4 May 2025:
Add onto my worm picture: At the end, let the trinity metamorphose by successive steps, so that the trinity becomes one leg of a new sequence, the other two legs of which are eels, then fish, then the crustaceans that nauseate underfoot (a sensorium buttressed by Eliot's ragged claws), then an ellipsis; and at the start, preempt the whole account by noting that there is a trinity to come at the kernel of what I am saying here, and each of its three components bears a specific and important valence of its own (the digestive-system-impacting grossness of the earthworms, the weaving (Mondrian, and Venice, and China) and folding (Hantaï, and Mallarmé) (and also Derrida's Hantaï-Nancy meditation) of the silkworms, the poetics-of-light-and-camera of the glowworms). And, in the bringing into a unity (that's what makes this a trinity, not a triplet) of these three, what is viscerally accomplished (alchemically, as in poiesis) is an assertion of the nondistinction of the most "corporeal" (in the metabolic-digestive stomach-turning: worms, not Worms, though "diet" is absolutely germane) and the most "abstract" (in the intricacies of the trinity-dynamic); and it is upon this nondistinction that my realist (Baudelairean-Correspondances) account of the action/function of abstraction depends.

So that, in all, I have:
_____]

I speak always of suffocation when I am, for one of countless (or maybe only of two) reasons, without words. I would not say, at these times, that I am "choked with rage."
But I learn that "Rivette was enthralled by Balthus's depictions of adolescence, which visionary dramatist Antonin Artaud characterised in 1936 as 'angular and choked with rage.'"
Is there, after all, something in common? I say "suffocated," Hantaï said (to Didi-Huberman, was it 1997?) "gagged," Artaud says "choked" for Balthus. Is there a force, a "rage," behind or within my suffocation? A force: Rather, what Klossowski would call an impulse, the only category of thing which is real.

I found myself thinking again and again back to this obscure and mystifying passage which ends Klossowski's "Sade and Fourier," published alongside "Living Currency" as something like his final written statement, so says Paul Foss-Heimlich. For some reason, when I first read it, I didn't read "the prostitution of these sweethearts" literally; it perhaps just bounced off me, so affixed was I by the advent of that image which immediately preceded it, Fourier's "Angelicate": "a male and female couple who, despite their uncommon beauty, are chaste in respect of each other." What is it that, long after receiving it (and the silence that followed), makes it persist? Is it, at the end, Fourier's version that matters, or Klossowski's (if that can be said to be different), or indeed Pasolini's (I am thinking of the sham wedding in Salò), or--and here is the crux--mine, with the omission of the prostitution: And to this last I append the question, is the abstracted prostitution of the public view of beauty (such as it has been much discussed in the age of universally liquid dissemination of all images--thinking, for example, of certain things Olivia Kan-Sperling has written) really, in the last analysis, prostitution--by Klossowski's standards? By mine? By the ones which count?

"Fourier understood perfectly what the deliberate act of selling oneself means for the voluptuous imagination. Yet how was he able to incorporate the simulacrum of this gesture in his 'Harmonian' economy when he considered it one of the abominations of 'Civilization'? / By demonstrating, in a strangely theatrical and yet perverse bargain with the spirit of competition, that chaste love and animal lust are closely interrelated. Yet this demonstration is only possible if the rarity of chaste love is redeemed by the tribute paid to the carnal demands of the multitude. In The New Amorous World, one example of this demonstration is the mission of the so-called 'Angelicate': a male and female couple who, despite their uncommon beauty, are chaste in respect of each other. What we find here is a kind of priesthood, where the ultimate price of serenity is the prostitution of these sweethearts. Indeed, both of them feel intense bliss when independently surrendering to the desires of their innumerable suitors. Thus, for Fourier, the more these angelic lovers (precisely because they are angels) meet the carnal 'demands' of the multitude, the greater is their spiritual value: a prestige that derives from the negation – or, rather, from the simulacrum of a negation – of animal gratification for its own sake. It is by sacrificing themselves to the animal passions that the angels are able to find redemption, while these passions drive up the price of so-called angelic 'purity.' Far from scorning the carnal act, they are

its ultimate incarnation.”

4 May 2025

From last night and this morning:

It is—august beyond anything this world can remember receiving. I speak as tall as the stars but I do not speak tearlessly. I speak of my crystalline vision but as now I still have nothing.

I look for meaning in spare signs. HAPS .: 76 is painted, as by a serviceman of the Department of Water and Power (who has rejected a certain application for employment--this is long ago, this is in the annals), on the sidewalk. The city feels dirty. It feels like more than just water is coming down on me in this mist. I am walking to purchase more gin with Bella’s money because I still cannot feasibly be financially symmetrical. I was just paid for the second time and felt, in that deposit, the imprint of the unpaid day off for the New York trip which had been planned before my job offer. A calculation revealed that the apartment I can soundly afford costs $1400 per month, which, split with Bella, would account for a third of my income from this job, this job which I cannot even actually secure, in all likelihood, and which, anyway, returns me to my home at 6 p.m. too tired to work and with between 2 and -1 hours of daylight to work, depending on the season.

The city feels not just dirty but also ugly. The store selling lighting fixtures, radiant at night, every style in one place, every one of them allumined, today seems to me ugly beyond redemption. Some length of time ago, maybe two weeks, maybe four, I passed it and imagined it transfigured in paint. I made a photograph of it while listening to Chanel Beads, then. I was on my way to buy a bottle of Tanqueray from the same store, the store like a gas station with no pumps, even though it has the parking lot for it.

I will make my delivery and, I expect, cry, under the weight of it all, and somewhere within that weight the twenty minutes elapsed in which I walked and bought and didn’t “work,” on “my work,” that ridiculous idea that I wouldn’t have touched even had I been at “home,” I haven’t the mind for it, I’m “suffocated,” “choked with rage” (that I experience only as emptiness; I said this word to Bella, but could not communicate, could only leave).

[4 May 2025:]

I cry at night, I cry in the morning, a dirty mist like the city’s, down onto my sweater, where it glitters like the fine shards of my last glass of Occitan wine, the one I dropped two nights ago. Water in wool, a figure seeming always to recur, for me, at my moments of most acute fragility. Reflective-refractive beads suspended long past the lifespan to which they are used, by the grace of the uncanny hydrophobia of this treasured animalian excrescence, an excrement which I chose to wear today, quite deliberately, in a funebrical black. (I forego “funereal” for the sake of propagating, if only for myself, a remembrance of Mallarmé’s “Toast funèbre,” whose black sun is also that of Bataille and Pseudo-Dionysius and every other apophate: Nul ptyx against the same astral black, in the eclipsed sun Antoine Caron painted over the Areopagus, the same one in

the night sealed by a self-allegorical septuor.)

Al Rayyan “just really good painting” short review
Hodges review where I draw out the Bella conversation and without taking a stand plot out that both reactions are possible—mine where the filmic armature almost immediately slips into subconsciousness and just conditions the perception of the paintcraft, and Bella’s where it remains an obstacle to authentic painterly (formal, aesthetic, phenomeno-sensitive; take your pick—I just mean, the kind of looking where you both look at the object and look at your looking) looking.
Other stuff from as of late (Diaphane, Daisy Sheff, Xinyi Cheng): Make placeholders for it
Follow up with Eli maybe, and with Artillery maybe

The window: recall that the other side is just flipped L-R except for the bottom register which is also flipped vertically; recall the light, the effulgent ultramarine, but achieve it by other wise; the “sigils” ought to be Mathieu letterhead insigniae, perhaps not the one for the Action journal, but in any case one of his, to stand in for the emblemata / insignia / rebus / graphical “word” thing for which he stands, for me.

And the other window: Note that I gleaned today that all the pictures flanked by those upward-off-centric ribs have an upward-off-centric lean/momentum of their own; so that, by replacing the middle picture with a Boycean impasto-with-well-handled-brightness nonrepresentational (explicitly formal-eye-necessitating) picture, if I make that new picture also be one with a precisely corresponding upward momentum, then I retain that correspondance-abstraction step I gleaned, making my active abstract-eye an indispensable step of this actual process, making this serviceable as a prototypical authentic trobatum-finding and -transposition, an authentic prototype of the gathering of the strange.

Brief longing for a self-flagellatory practice, to relocate the contortion-compulsion (the lacerative impulse) which I had to vent in a poor manner last night (I hit my head on a door frame, three times in quick succession; it caused me to drop to the floor, but it prevented me from reaching for a knife, which, I can't fully understand why, was the simultaneous impulse), and realign it in a good, authentically "ascetic" (after the spirit of that little but great spirit I've already gleaned from Harpham) state.

From John 21: The mention of "breakfast" ("When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread. / Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you just caught." / So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large fish. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. / Jesus said to them, 'Come, have breakfast'") implies that these were working in a part of the day before its first eating, and so, when I soon switch to the same regime, I will be after their example, and can rely on such filiation in my pursuit of a perfection-tending dynamic of the body-soul (as I was saying above in reference to the worms image, nondistinction thereof: the Hesychasts practiced a deep knowledge of this nondistinction, and I should too).

What I felt last night was the world at its most bare, its most raw, its most unbearable, and it is this same for which Blanchot (and, in brief glimpses, Reverdy) is indispensable. Blanchot alchemizes it into a dazzling vision of onement of the fire that inheres in all being, on the one hand, and the most suffocatory choking desperate crushing sensation of the omnipervasive banality that is the world, on the other. Perhaps I can in some manner do the same.

"Dirty but honest, sad but true," these words for some reason in my head, remind me of a car parked on Washington Blvd, "dirty hands, clean money," said a bumper sticker. I can't help but think it is in some way true of what I am pursuing, at immense cost, different though the

sentiment behind the sticker might be from my own.

I've been ambivalently turning over these little heaps of signifiers, textures, forms, etc., all related to Nicolas Gabard. Brian Ferry, Roxy Music, Serge Gainsbourg: these have filled my head for almost a week now, thanks to him, and in some way I really believe in this nexus of things for myself. Bella and I are talking even more seriously about Paris too: Renew this Los Angeles lease for one year, and then it's a necessity; and, in the meantime, work on something which is full of hope but which can be cynically articulated as "liquidate Los Angeles art world connections into international ones." At work, I've listened now to many interviews and two books--Bruges-la-morte and Philosophie dans le boudoir--in French, and I feel that the pareidolia of phonemes-from-sounds is becoming easier by the day.

Anyway, Gabard's brand is participating, even to an unusually high degree, in the bric-a-brac that fashion labels tend to accumulate around themselves, and the network he plots is remarkably close to the vague one I've always imagined for myself. Melville's Delon, Beckett, etc., are the core in common; on my side there is a greater emphasis, unexpectedly, on the années trente: Blanchot, Klossowski, Bataille, these are the figures I'm dwelling on lately. Just needed to dump some details and images here.
For Melville, Gabard had these stills and sentences (among several others) generated, who knows how; nonetheless, I find them worth retaining. "The leading characters only wear white shirts, anthracite grey or navy blue suits on which are added a camel overcoat or a beige trench coat. Felt hat, trench-coat belted at the waist, sunglasses (aviators or thick tortoise-shell) compose the Melvillian uniform, where the dandy meets the thug."

And then there's the photographer André Kertész, whose name is familiar, whose work is ambivalent to me unless through a casual Cartier-Bresson eye or through a Krauss-Caillois one, but who afforded me these precious images, which I stumbled upon while trying to locate any documented intersection of Mondrian and the Surrealists.

In the second image, I see the apartment that was the setting for Au moment voulu. In the third one, I see the Brasserie Lipp of Le souffleur.

Back to Gabard, though: From him I was compelled to record the following snippets:

Wrangler 635

Prince of wales pattern

American apparel swim trunk

Lanvin menswear

Halston documentary

1972 "battle of Versailles"

Spin magazine 2005

Bergman, Visconti, Fellini, Cassavetes, as a list

My idea for a necklace with two pearls - aluminum looking chain?

Bally: Swiss brand, shoes, but too fragile

Who the hell is this?

Tiepolo, “Pulcinella on holiday”

Pointers to biographical and cinematic material for Klossowski, from Paul Foss Heimlich:
“For the ‘standard’ biographies of Klossowski, see Alain Arnaud, Pierre Klossowski (Éditions de Seuil, 1990); Jean Decottignies, Klossowski, notre prochain (Éditions Henri Veyrier, 1985) and Pierre Klossowski: Biographie d’un monomane (Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 1997); and Jean-Maurice Monnoyer, Le Peintre et le demon: entretiens avec Pierre Klossowski (Flammarion, 1985). Useful English accounts can also be found in Ian James, Pierre Klossowski: The Persistence of a Name (Legenda, 2000); Denis Hollier, The College of Sociology 1937–39, trans. Betsy Wing (University of Minnesota Press, 1988); and Castanet, op. cit. Regarding Klossowski’s ‘epistemological rupture’ of 1972, see Castanet, 3–6, 249. Finally, a survey of his graphite and coloured-crayon drawings and late polychrome acrylic sculptures can be found in the exhibition catalogue, Anima: Pierre Klossowski (Musée d’art et d’histoire, Genève, 1995).”
“Fleischer’s film, available with subtitles on YouTube, offers invaluable insight into the cinematic ‘construction’ of Klossowski’s biography. All unattributed citations past this point derive from this source.”

In this analysis, what Oehlen uses “cubist” to refer to, sounds like the re-Symbolist ideal of hyperdetermination (crystalline interlocking).
Oehlen on 80s de Kooning: “If the late de Kooning paintings were graphic, then they would be lines on a blank white background, but that is definitely not the case. These lines are outlines of an imaginary volume, a body or something, an object, a girl. And if you follow these lines, some of them have not only one job, like you can say in this part there’s something on the right and a void is on the left, but on the other end of the line it could change its meaning and the body could exist on the other side. And that means that the whole thing is like a Cubist painting. It holds a lot of volumes, a lot of bodies start looking at you, and the picture gets depth. You can dive into the painting, which you couldn’t do with a graphic painting.”

6 May 2025

I read the beginning of Thomas the Obscure with a feeling--too familiar to be passionate, but unmistakable--of the kind of recognition that, so the cliché has it, breeds envy. What I mean is that I know myself to be intimately capable of this same kind of sensory détournant-microscopy, which also reminds one of Saoirse Bertram's "Liebesleid" or Laszlo Horvath's "Memory is a Toy."

A powerful association for the immersion-sited body-self-decomposition with which I will scan my oscillatory work. (Of course I do not believe so much in the use of literature as means to "critique" the "subject"; a new suppôt reconstitutes itself, no matter what you want to call it. Only a true extreme-experience of aesthesis, true ekstasis, and I am still not sure whether even Bataille was really experiencing that (though I am playing along), deranges the "self" in so real a way as to put it under serious threat, into serious question, as so many theorists desire. The uncanny cannot be parceled out and bottled. Every painting is a new demand.)

Anyway, here is that opening, for convenient reference:

"THOMAS SAT DOWN and looked at the sea. He remained motionless for a time, as if he had come there to follow the movements of the other swimmers and, although the fog prevented him from seeing very far, he stayed there, obstinately, his eyes fixed on the bodies floating with difficulty. Then, when a more powerful wave reached him, he went down onto the sloping sand and slipped among the currents, which quickly immersed him. The sea was calm, and Thomas was in the habit of swimming for long periods without tiring. But today he had chosen a new route. The fog hid the shore. A cloud had come down upon the sea and the surface was lost in a glow which seemed the only truly real thing. Currents shook him, though without giving him the feeling of being in the midst of the waves and of rolling in familiar elements. The conviction that there was, in fact, no water at all made even his effort to swim into a frivolous exercise from which he drew nothing but discouragement, Perhaps he should only have had to get control of himself to drive away such thoughts, but his eye found nothing to cling to, and it seemed to him that he was staring into the void with the intention of finding help there. It was then that the sea, driven by the wind, broke loose. The storm tossed it, scattered it into inaccessible regions; the squalls turned the sky upside down and, at the same time, there reigned a silence and a calm which gave the impression that everything was already destroyed. Thomas sought to free himself from the insipid flood which was invading him. A piercing cold paralyzed his arms. The water swirled in whirlpools. Was it actually water? One moment the foam leapt before his eyes in whitish flakes, the next the absence of water took hold of his body and drew it along violently. His breathing became slower; for a few moments he held in his mouth the liquid which the squalls drove against his head: a tepid sweetness, strange brew of a man deprived of the sense of taste. Then, whether from fatigue or for an unknown reason, his limbs gave him the same sense of foreignness as the water in which they were tossed. This feeling seemed almost pleasant at first. As he swam, he pursued a sort of revery in which he confused himself with the sea. The intoxication of leaving himself, of slipping into the void, of dispersing himself in the thought of

water, made him forget every discomfort. And even when this ideal sea which he was becoming ever more intimately had in turn become the real sea, in which he was virtually drowned, he was not moved as he should have been: of course, there was something intolerable about swimming this way, aimlessly, with a body which was of no use to him beyond thinking that he was swimming, but he also experienced a sense of relief, as if he had finally discovered the key to the situation, and, as far as he was concerned, it all came down to continuing his endless journey, with an absence of organism in an absence of sea. The illusion did not last. He was forced to roll from one side to the other, like a boat adrift, in the water which gave him a body to swim. What escape was there? To struggle in order not to be carried away by the wave which was his arm? To go under? To drown himself bitterly in himself? That would surely have been the moment to stop, but a hope remained; he went on swimming as if, deep within the restored core of his being, he had discovered a new possibility. He swam, a monster without fins. Under the giant microscope, he turned himself into an enterprising mass of cilia and vibrations. The temptation took on an entirely bizarre character when he sought to slip from the drop of water into a region which was vague and yet infinitely precise, a sort of holy place, so perfectly suited to him that it was enough for him to be there, to be; it was like an imaginary hollow which he entered because, before he was there, his imprint was there already. And so he made a last effort to fit completely inside. It was easy; he encountered no obstacles; he rejoined himself; he blended with himself, entering into this place which no one else could penetrate.
“At last he had to come back. He found his way easily and his feet touched bottom at a place which some of the swimmers used for diving. The fatigue was gone. He still had a humming in his ears and a burning in his eyes, as might be expected after staying too long in the salt water. He became conscious of this as, turning toward the infinite sheet of water reflecting the sun, he tried to tell in which direction he had gone. At that point, there was a real mist before his sight, and he could pick out absolutely anything in this murky void which his gaze penetrated feverishly. Peering out, he discovered a man who was swimming far off, nearly lost below the horizon. At such a distance, the swimmer was always escaping him. He would see him, then lose sight of him, though he had the feeling that he was following his every move: not only perceiving him clearly all the time, but being brought near him in a completely intimate way, such that no other sort of contact could have brought him closer. He stayed a long time, watching and wait-ing. There was in this contemplation something painful which resembled the manifestation of an excessive freedom, a freedom obtained by breaking every bond. His face clouded over and took on an unusual expression.”
And the second part, where “HE NEVERTHELESS DECIDED to turn his back to the sea and entered a small woods where he lay down after taking a few steps” and then he is in that hole or hollow or grave, affords ample more of just what I’m talking about.

“Cezanne? Mathieu ? In Blanchot sirens” [I can’t find what I thought I heard]

Blanchot madness of the day: within the first few pages (~ “coolness” and “solidity”) an attitude toward death that feels true to me and Bella and maybe even revelatory / clarifying existing habitus.

“I have known joys. That is saying too little: I am alive, and this life gives me the greatest pleasure. And what about death? When I die (perhaps any minute now), I will feel immense pleasure. I am not talking about the foretaste of death, which his stale and often disagreeable. Suffering dulls the senses. But this is the remarkable truth, and I am sure of it: I experience boundless pleasure in living, and I will take boundless satisfaction in dying.”

[So far, it seems reflexively quite out of step with the unadulterated negative sense which still accompanies death, for me. But I think, upon second thought, that there is a resonance on a deeper level, when I try to incorporate into the account my otherwise-unaccountable pulsion in the most violent moments of negative appraisal, those unassailably lucid overwhelmings that it is too-much, in which the pulsion takes on a form, and the form is unto death.]

[I suppose this is how the unimaginable might be realized, if it happened; but this is mere conjecture, because that, my most potent blindspot, that upon which I cannot even begin to think, is precisely what I called it, unimaginable.] “I have loved people, I have lost them. I went mad when that blow struck me, because it is hell. But there was no witness to my madness, my frenzy was not evident; only my innermost being was mad. Sometimes I became enraged. People would say to me, "Why are you so calm?" But I was scorched from head to foot; at night I would run through the streets and howl; during the day I would work calmly.”

…

“As reason returned to me, memory came with it, and I saw that even on the worst days, when I thought I was utterly and completely miserable, I was nevertheless, and nearly all the time, extremely happy. [I read this in these terms: I can avow this, too, as long as one accounts for the real operation of aestheticization, which is, really, just the most fundamental phenomenological operation of adopting passivity in the attentional gaze, (I have now fumbled the phrasing twice) yes, the world is beautiful when you look at it, what it is is that in what Heidegger would call everyday or fallen being or the being of the “they”-self, you precisely never do “look at” it.] That gave me something to think about. The discovery was not a pleasant one. It seemed to me that I was losing a great deal. [Exactly! I feel a related thing all the time. And I know what it is that it seemed he was losing: it was the complement of the misery, the implicit good thing or good mode by comparison to which life was able to be judged miserable, which was only a ghost emergent of the comparison itself.] I asked myself, wasn't I sad, hadn't I felt my life breaking up? Yes, that had been true; but each minute, when I stayed without moving in a corner of the room, the cool of the night and the stability of the ground made me breathe and rest on gladness.”

Find out whether there is a town in Belgium even more so than Sint Martens Latem; where is Sebastian from and what were those metallic reliefs?

Etc.

But the auratic substance of his story--even just as a fiction! That those in Ghent who know in closed rooms know where the missing panel of the altarpiece is and know, further, that it is in Ghent--that Ludovic lives today and in some other century, being, in other words, that Ludovic lives in the time of this fiction (if it is taken as fiction, not at all that this is the only way in which to take his story)--

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Pertaining to the figure of the marionette:

I thought, while listening (I think) to Paul Foss-Heimlich's essay on Klossowski's "Sade and Fourier," that there is a meeting of hitherto-thought incommensurables--perhaps another instance of Kleist's "horseshoe-shaped world" [that's a misquote: Kleist says "ring-shaped world"], which is itself something quite distinct (I think) from something pseudomorphically reminiscent which Hegel achieves by means of the dialectic--in two different ideas of what we are and where the new or the real comes from, one being mine, the other being the Nietzschean-Klossowskian one. I, for my part, hold onto the term "person" (and even its plural: "persons"). We (Klossowski and I, maybe even Nietzsche too; I never touch him, never have, but maybe Klossowski and Nancy jointly afford grounds that I should) share an enormous respect for the chaotic, irreducible, ineluctable pulsions which are the motus of the world, between every atom, in control of every one of "us" at all moments (even at our most collected). But I think that makes us, we marionettes, elegant, sublime in our dance, not abject (the real crux of Kleist's Uber das Marionettentheater, the question of mechanicity and personhood, is right at the core here). Or, if the sense of the abject does inhere, then it inheres only as a transfigured abject, one that is not at all empty, one that is as full of life and light (feu and all that which is cru) as even the emptiest of Blanchot's rooms, the starkest of his days. And in any case, these pulsions are cause to adore, cause to make a whole liturgy, cause first of all for the Love which is my name for Blanchot's or Nancy's absurdly stringent accounts of what we owe each other, the demand that inheres in relation (the demand of relation itself).

But why am I talking in this way.

7 May 2025

Jointure of Picasso and Riegl is a point on which I can also assert my anti-Vasarian specificity — look closely, think of my little guys, Ren looking at viewer

"the Viennese art historian Alois Riegl described
the very absence of psychic cohesion between depicted persons as evidence of a distinct stylistic will.9 He was speaking of the traditional Dutch group portrait (fig. 3)- the primitive kind, before Rembrandt's dramatic naturalism restored it to the main European tradition. And his profound analysis of this native genre -the most original expression of the Dutch genius, he called it -was a courageous bid to enfranchise a mode of painting which, judged by Italian compositional standards, had always seemed inept and provincial. Riegl showed that Dutch art, even in its fifteenth-century religious narratives, suppressed the dramatic encounter which expresses a will, the coordination of action and responsive reaction which acknowledges the unifying force of an event. Instead of graduated active and passive participation, Dutch art strove, on the contrary, to project in each figure a state of utmost attentiveness, i.e., a state of mind that dispelled the distinction between active and passive. The negation of psychic rapport between actors, their mutual autonomy and spirited dissociation even from their own doings -and their incapacity for joint participation in a unified space -all these "negative" factors tightened the positive hold of each single figure on the responsive viewer; the unity of the picture was, as Riegl put it, not objective-internal, but externalized in the beholder's subjective experience.
Riegl's pioneering regard for this naive Northern genre is comparable to Picasso's early admiration for Iberian and tribal art. And the historian's definition of its intrinsic value, formulated in opposition to the narrative mode, parallels Picasso's shift from that early study (fig. 5) to the Demoiselles painting." (13 in the October publication of "The Philosophical Brothel").

Note, in passing, that Pontormo provides perhaps the consummate anti-Vasarian assertion, on precisely this same count, to ever come from within the Italian tradition; it is his Visitation.

Three pose-types going on below; a couple are existing types for which the below are just new examples.

(

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8 May 2025

From The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, I was impressed by this figure:

"She was married to a spanish painter Pichot, who was rather a wonderful creature, he was long and thin like one of those primitive Christs in spanish churches and when he did a spanish dance which he did later at the famous banquet to Rousseau, he was awe inspiringly religious."

Joe, when he comes into the shop, looks (as in "stands and looks," not "resembles") like the figure of the painter in Matisse's "The Conversation."

Way back when I mentioned Marie Laurencin in trying to say what I was thinking about Jake Stutz, long before I met him, it was a Laurencin like this, which I may not even have known to

exist, that I meant.

9 May 2025

I've never liked--or, for that matter, really looked at--the work of Alex da Corte. But I glanced into this publication Matthew Marks brought out for him, and was arrested by glimpses of things directly graftable onto what I'm working on.

The essay from which these are excerpted is by Sabrina Tarasoff.

This is precisely what allures me in the Ren and Stimpy dimension of my "little guys"; the reason it has to be Ren and Stimpy, and not just cartoons in general, is that they are the pinnacle of this elasticity's attraction: "Elasticity attracts, Sergei Eisenstein writes in the midst of his Disney-delirium, in its provision of a universal palette of all possible forms."

I don't know where she gets this first maxim, but it is the kind of assertion that I have been seeking to build into the core of my "little guys," the kind of generative principle conceived (broadly, until Klossowski) as a perversion barren of interest but evident now (since Steiberg's vision of the situation of the Demoiselles, at least) as precisely the sort of objective-correlative which is necessary in order for the painting to truly come alive and tense the most important dimension of all, that of with as Nancy speaks of it: "Masochism's tableau vivant obliges the self to confront the lapse that causes it. Summoned in the window frame was the significance of the sequential image in motion; the cat's seemingly still pose surprised in the gradual unfurling of a destination. The cat became a procession of cats, each glittered in solitude, stillness, and the fragmented momentum of their apparition as a hypnotic relay of single instances on repeat. The cat's arrivals and departures turned to form a self-enclosed loop that began each evening at its end - again and again and again. The visuals were set up to dissolve form into dissociative, wondrous drift. Fantasy's power lay in the patient wait."

The space in the bluemngarten painting I began long ago ought to be the yet-to-be-filled-in (yet-to-be-worlded) negative space that persists in back of Kleist's "ring shaped world," the gap (caesura) between the points of (Kohlhaas's) horseshoe, a space of pure capacitance, the reentry into the garden from out the other side that the Marionettentheater's interlocutor hypothesizes (the delivery is too innocent in its matter-of-factness to come off, today, at least to me, as

heresy).

Two nights ago I read this to Bella because, well, it's such a nice thing to say, from Masheck in "Mondrian the New Yorker":

"Instead of a presumptuously flat, late Post-Impressionist plane, spatial only in its contamination by the effects of color, what we now get is a more aggressive kind of flatness—one that comes from pressing down an interwoven trellis of color, making it approach infinite shallowness by topological adjustments of the overlaps within the arabesque. Space is no longer seen as a stubborn residue but as a responsible, deliberate factor, even if one still wants very little (like vermouth in an American martini)."

Then I remembered another fragment which contained remarkably many of the same ingredients, transposed into a completely new utterance. From Steinberg's "The Philosophical Brothel":

"The shape of the porrón--a Spanish drinking vessel designed for jetting wine down one's throat-is characterized by an erect spout, and it had recently begun to intrigue Picasso."

In The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas there is an Alsatian priest who lives like us:

"One priest who gave us a great deal of good advice and with whom we became very friendly had only one large room left in his house. Without any screens or partitions he had made himself three rooms, the first third had his parlour furniture, the second third his dining room furniture and the last third his bedroom furniture. When we lunched with him and we lunched well and his alsatian wines were very good, he received us in his parlour, he then excused himself and withdrew into his bedroom to wash his hands, and then he invited us very formally to come into the dining room, it was like an old-fashioned stage setting."

10 May 2025

On yesterday's evening, rushed between Maddie's play and an exhaustive and hot and long work day (not enough time outside to require sunscreen, but so much sanding that the muscles in my arms wavered upon giving out as they never have before on this job--not that they were screaming, but that they were about to just go no further), I got into the shower;

I am at the height of my augmentation of bodily mass, becoming not enormous but

unexpectably stout at every measure;
In the shower, I looked down at my toes, my toes which have always looked to me like they are rather to some extent the opposite of both “powerfully / effectively built” and “elegantly long”--rather than out ahead of the foot they go more down, into the floor, and this they don’t do particularly straight--and, by contrast to their form to which I am used, and at the end of a foreshortened calf and leg stout beyond what it has been for years, and in the same field of view as my solid abdomen with its muscles visibly large though padded with the mass of their facture so that from the bottom of my ribs (which come quite close to the top of my pelvis) down to the top of the bulk of the muscles in my thighs there is a firm vertical, a trunk like that of a tree--
I thought of the following stout figures, and thought of finding, in them, the possibility for a nudity and a sexuality sufficiently abstracted to allow to play out with unheard-of freedom in my painting: Abstracted, that is, in two ways; at once abstracted from any publicly-perceptible notion of my own desire and my own life, and abstracted from the forms of allure and of nakedness now in public circulation (and therefore unavailable to art).
In their freedom from these things they can attain to a frankness and an explicitude at equal altitude to that of the newest Julien Nguyen painting, but built on a completely other foundation.
The big limbs of two females who I cannot name and to whom I would in no world have experienced attraction and whom, therefore, I can paint into these figures at stout balletic play-into-situation (situation so Nancy-bare in its explosion of raw momentum-into-each-other; is there a painter of whom my idea is reminding me?)
It may be Dunham’s wrestlers, seen as female if they are; Picasso’s “neo-Classical” figures (on a beach, etc.) are in my head, but, I insist, if what I am talking about finds realization, it will not be in any peril of proximity to these.

And the following which I also pasted above.

Then there is this painter, Nat Meade, about whom I learned from Instagram five years ago before I figured out what algorithm really was:

And of course him:

The latter Schutz has long been dear to me because of the Garden topos, a topos I've lately been fixed on, hard, because of the Kleist Marionettentheater idea of getting back in from the other side, which I think also aligns with Teilhard's vision (at least, or especially, such as it is presented in "Atomism of Spirit") (even if there is much work around the edges in order to hash out an alignment between me and him).

And for the same reason, the Eden of Stanley Spencer that I saw at the Tate, a painter perhaps not, au fond, amenable to my vision (his compositions are profligately centrifugal), or, who knows, maybe he is (maybe I can avoid being blocked off by this fact), but in any case this image is part of what I think of when I think of the Garden, lately.

Even Stein has a Garden of her own; here is the facture of its remembrance (and all such gardens arrive, when they do, as remembrance, imagination):

“When they arrived in California they went to an orange grove but she does not remember any oranges but remembers filling up her father's cigar boxes with little limes which were very wonderful. / They came by slow stages to San Francisco and settled down in Oakland. She remembers there the eucalyptus trees seeming to her so tall and thin and savage and the animal life very wild. But all this and much more, all the physical life of these days, she has described in the life of the Hersland family in her Making of Americans.”

I think that it is important to me to achieve the value of “even working,” an “evenly worked surface,” on a certain plane of looking. Not, of course, that my brush needs to have spent an approximately equal time in each square of one of more imaginary regular grids overlaid.
I find this touchstone for this value “a continuous design.” In Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas: “He had a prodigious memory and could recite all of Milton’s Paradise Lost by heart and also all the translations of chinese poems of which Gertrude Stein was very fond. He had been in China and he was later to live permanently in the South Sea islands … . He had a passion for oriental stuffs. He adored as he said a simple centre and a continuous design.”
I find precisely this in much of Gertrude Stein’s writing; it comes from a technique which may be called “parataxis”; it is the working method of sheer agglutination, in which one thing follows upon another, and the literary object is built out as though laterally. This notion has become apparent to me in much of her work, and it becomes apparent again by page 11 of Lucy Church Amiably.

About induction and oscillation:

The reason any “espresso cup” work needs to be “oscillatory” is because only in establishing that structure, in plotting tangents into and out of itself, entries and exits, can it transfigure life itself.

I value art that is vitally connected with life. Rasoul Ashtary and Magnus Peterson Horner and cubism in all its successes: These are what comes to mind.

Stein does too. A writer who can more or less at the same time write Tender Buttons and The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas and The Making of Americans, and thereupon to insist and bear witness that these things are to be written (and perhaps also to be read) at the same time.

This will sound vulgar, but it is only because of the context in which the idea is now taught. The idea didn’t at one point have to do with what is now pictured by “mathematics”; it didn’t, at one point, have the name “induction.” But the idea that something can be proved in general by the pairing of one or more base cases and one or more induction steps--that is the same idea whereby “espresso cup” art, even while being a finite object, can transfigure life itself.

Every painting a “base case”; “n = 0” or “n = 1” is the (fallen, contingent, and, likely, ugly) model. Likewise “if it is true of n then it is true of n + 1” is by no means the only possible

“induction step.” Such a step can be taken in any direction (I say any and not either because the space of art has who knows how many dimensions but has certainly more than one) and at any increment (if, in the directions that are open, the idea of “increment” even still makes sense).

“Well, in my work you will find shiningly united all that you wonder and worry about.” This line to be put in the mouth of an impotent young artist or a magisterial uncle-alchemist.

Almost comically specific to how, every morning and evening, I fell--almost so bluntly on the head of this stubborn nail that it loses art-touch--it’s simply a direct comment from my every-morning hip: A poem by Laurenc Szabó, collected in a review of Transition that I located because it includes Stein’s “Life and Death of Juan Gris” (I have cried on some fraction between one-third and two-thirds of the last ten days, hot tears that if they do not choke me into convulsive seizures then they pour down my cheeks in high-velocity rivulets, my head still aches from that one night seven days ago, this morning it is Saturday and I am free but the sun shines bright and hot and I am sweating in my room before 10 a.m.):

Laurenc Szabó, “A Quarter of an Hour Between God and the Office.”

BLESSED BE THOU, LOVELY
morning that pour
your warm wave into my face;
when I step over
my sad threshold: oh!
the peace of God
lies behind me already.
be blessed still,
lovely quarter of an hour,
when the rumbling street-cars
hurl me to the city,
the mills, the boring offices,
the fetid prisons
of the cowardly day,
when through the souls and through the windows
shines the oblique light!
Now
I belong to myself, furtively I receive
into my rejuvenated eyes

the warmth of gentle life,
the bright stockings of hastening girls,
the gipsy desires of misery
chained to money,
and I embrace my brothers running with me
in the street-cars that are hurled
to the city of money,
accursed prisons
of the inquisitor-day,
and dreaming with me of all the beauty
and weeping with every joy,
for this is the last farewell to life
this moment before the office,
in the sun-sprinkled street, this moment,
revolt of my rested senses,
daily hope for liberty,
unique and holy quarter of an hour
between God and the office.
Blessed be thou, lovely trip in the street-car,
golden morning,
for having really stayed by me,
and joyously
accept the salute of those about to die.

In The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas Stein-Toklas says of Gris that "[Poetry and prose, and, by extension, painting] should consist of an exact reproduction of either an outer or an inner reality. / It was this conception of exactitude that made the close understanding between Gertrude Stein and Juan Gris. / Juan Gris also conceived exactitude but in him exactitude had a mystical basis. As a mystic it was necessary for him to be exact," and that "The most moving thing Gertrude Stein has ever written is The Life and Death of Juan Gris," which caused me to seek this "Life and Death of Juan Gris"; in it I find something much like something I've written:

"... the school of Faintainebleau delicate deliberate measured and free all these things seduced. I am seduced and then I am seduced over again he was fond of saying. He had his own Spanish gift of intimacy. We were intimate. Juan knew what he did."

This reminds me of this note I have made, about "Venus and the Goddess of the Waters" at the Louvre:

“… To intend to paint something which would bring to one’s mind the words ‘the subject, probably inspired by an elaborate mythological poem, is difficult to identify with any certainty,’ as did this painting. / More ink (spilled for this painting) that, abstracted away from any painting, can germinate new images and arrangements in my mind: “The stilted essay in elegant gesture, the elongated silhouettes, the delicate metallic colors … . … a decorative precision in the painting of the flowers reminiscent of medieval illuminations; a fragile grace about the bodies; and a certain naïveté in the composition …’ …”

Perhaps it is in this “Juan knew what he did” and in this “deliberate measured” (among “the school of Faintainebleau delicate deliberate measured and free”) that Stein locates (measures-out?) Gris’s “clarity” (“Picasso created [cubism] and Juan Gris permeated it with his clarity and his exaltation”).

Then, here is that piece’s last section, in which Stein finds a way to put in concrete talismanic-in-small-aggregate (that is, -in-conjunction, -in-direct-conjunction) words something to which I can only (or do, by convenience) refer to elliptically, that is, by way of a name: “person” (“Therein Juan Gris is not anything but more than anything. … ‘... and he smiled so gently and said I was everything’”) and that which (in its capacity as “everything”) cannot be exchanged or liquidated, and, further, “artist” (“This is what is to be measured. He made something that is to be measured. And that is that something. [Aside: This is precisely what I mean by “literary-materiality”] / Therein Juan Gris is not anything but more than anything. He made that thing. He made the thing. He made a thing to be measured. … And so he made it very well loving and he made it with plainly playing”), that which, in an additional way too, cannot be exchanged or liquidated.

In order that these fragments may easily be read in fluid full, here is that last section.

“As a Spaniard he knew cubism and had stepped through into it. He had stepped through it. There was beside this perfection. To have it shown you. Then came the war and desertion. There was little aid. Four years partly illness much perfection and rejoining beauty and perfection and then at the end there came a definite creation of something. This is what is to be measured. He made something that is to be measured. And that is that something.
Therein Juan Gris is not anything but more than anything. He made that thing. He made the thing. He made a thing to be measured.
Later having done it he could be sorry it was not why they liked it. And so he made it very well loving and he made it with plainly playing. And he liked a knife and all but reasonably. This is what is made to be and he then did some stage setting. We liked it but nobody else could see that something is everything. It is everything if it is what is it. Nobody can ask about measuring. Unfortunately. Juan could go on living. No one can say that Henry Kahnweiler can be left out of him. I remember he said "Kahnweiler goes on but no one buys anything and I said it to him and he smiled so gently and said I was everything." This is the history of Juan Gris.”

Life is too hard and too hard and then it is ripped away. At best it is beautiful and then too hard and then too hard and then it is bittersweet and then it is ripped away.

I have tried all day to write in ultrafine sharpie onto paper a note for my mother to read on Mothers' Day. I have cried four times today and only the last has to do with this, but, I cannot write anything because I have (I am) no consolation to offer in the face of the only thing that I can think about on the Mothers' Day this year: That it is bittersweet and then it is ripped away (this year among the years that there have been).
I walked down my street to buy a lunch, the sweet and humble and beautiful lunch that I love to buy with a ten dollar bill and receive change, a potato beorek and tan and tahini bread.

I stepped out the back of my building and the wall of vegetation was green so bright as though it had never been seen. This wall extended jurassic tendrils out, and up, toward the trees in the sky blinding blue. Through green I saw an edifice of untreated wood. I had not seen it before, though I've lived now for thirteen months in this massive building blinding white, the one for which I had to too-generously invoke "le Corbu" in order to enjoy beginning to live in it.

I walked through the air that, I was pleased to find, did not cause me to sweat even though it is read to have 95 degrees, and I cried for the fourth time. This is not "by way of" saying anything; it is just what happened.

I thought in passing that Thomas the Obscure, on the shore, resembled these children that Paula Modersohn-Becker saw:

And I thought of the faces on the boys that Magnus Peterson-Horner paints.

I thought of myself as a child inconsolable in this hot prelapsaria, a child unchecked by the learned restraint which in others prevents overwhelmings and panics from endangering the integrity of the body. This child crashing slowly through hot dense plants grimaces so violently as to lose his face, propels his head into the trunks of vines and trees, claws at the skin around his eyes. He may impair his sight. He may not claw deeply enough at the flesh in order to lastingly impair his sight; he may claw so that the opened body may eventually close and leave scarring that is only visible; but this is not certain; he may, after all, claw unto permanent impairment of the visual faculty.

This is from Rexroth's introduction to his Selected Poems of Pierre Reverdy:

"Pierre Reverdy [works] with dismembered propositions from which subject, operator and object have been wrenched free and restructured into an invisible or subliminal discourse which owes its cogency to its own strict, complex and secret logic.

Poetry such as this attempts not just a new syntax of the word. Its revolution is aimed at the syntax of the mind itself. Its restructuring of experience is purposive, not dreamlike, and hence it possesses an uncanniness fundamentally different in kind from the most haunted utterances of the Surrealist or Symbolist unconscious. Contrary to what we are taught, it appears first in the

ultimate expressions of Neo-Symbolism in Mallarmé, in his curious still lifes like "Autre Éventail," in occult dramatic molecules like "Petit Air," and, of course, above all in his hieratic metaphysical ritual, Un Coup de dés. It is in this tremendously ambitious poem in fact that all the virtues and the faults of the style, whether practiced by Re-verdy, Laura Riding or myself, can be found. These faults, as well as those virtues which he decided were in fact faults, led Yvor Winters to condemn all verse of this kind as the deliberate courting of madness. What he objected to in essence was the seeking of glamour, that effulgence which St. Thomas called the stigmata of a true work of art, as an end in itself. What James Joyce translates "wholeness, harmony and radiance" are qualities not only of all works of art but they are often sought deliberately."

Nice that Mallarmé's "curious still life" "Autre éventail," intermittently my favorite work of the greatest poet, is his primary touchstone, too.

And he continues with more referents deep at my stem's root: "Accompanying, as it were garbing, this insistent transcendence are sometimes certain projected physical responses induced or transmitted in the person undergoing the poetic experience, whether poet or reader. Vertigo, rapture, transport, crystalline and plangent sounds, shattered and refracted light, indefinite depths, weightlessness, piercing odors and tastes, and synthesizing these sensations and affects, an all-consuming clarity. These are the phenomena that often attend what theologians call natural mysticism. They can be found especially in the poetry of St. Mechtild of Magdeburg and St. Hildegarde of Bingen, great favorites of the psychologists who have written on this subject, but they are equally prominent in the poetry of Sappho or Henry Vaughan or the prose of Jacob Boehme, as well as in many modern poets. They have often been equated with the idioretinal and vasomotor disturbances caused by drugs, migraine, or other dissociations of personality, or petit-mal epilepsy."

11 May 2025

While Bella was cutting out letters during her first use of the Cricut I bought her four and a half months ago, for a gift to Nala and Will, in a font that they love, I thought the interim forms, half-trimmed, were very interesting, organic and graphic-contour-energetic; and I would love to paint them.

12 May 2025

The last paragraph of Robert W. Greene's The Poetic Theory of Pierre Reverdy provides clarifying light welding together two of the ventricles of the heart of re-Symbolism:

"The vitality and the relevance of Reverdy's poetic theory stem from its being situated at the intersection of two lines of thought, the Cubist revolution and its consequences on the one hand, and on the other, the pure poetry tradition emanating from Baudelaire. Though an admitted disciple of Baudelaire in this regard, Reverdy was forever immunized against the temptation of "stalk[ing] the workings of his consciousness into the reaches of solitude and solipsism"' by an enduring admiration for the artist who "imagine d'après nature." His obsession with poetic purity was always balanced by his passion for objective reality. Precisely because he maintained himself "au tranchant cruelle-ment acéré," Reverdy also resisted the temptation of the object. Unlike Ponge, he never gave up his poet's right to perform "l'acte magique de transmutation du réel extérieur en réel intérieur," to conceptualize objective reality. The "glorification et la remise en honneur de la matière" which Reverdy saw as one of Cubism's accomplishments appears carried to its logical conclusion in Ponge. By the same token, one element in the pure poetry tradition, self-reflexiveness, attains its most extreme form in Symbolist introspection. Standing between Symbolism and Ponge, Reverdy at once reconciles them and revitalizes Baudelaire's dream."

13 May 2025

A pair of figures from Ulla Dydo's not-very-good book on Gertrude Stein reminds me of Lukas Quietzsch, and I like it:

On the way to work, I wrote:

Once I gather all of my breakfast pictures, mostly coffees, but all the pictures of that genre I've taken since moving here, once I gather them all up, then I think I paint a still life, probably a series of still lives.

The still life as a genre might be the unlocking key that I need, the armature that I need to hang all of my things upon.

Particularly, I'm conceiving it in the same way that Stein relied upon genres: still life and Tender Buttons, or her series of portraits, or the family history told as an epic (as in Making of Americans); but then also in the same terms as Rexroth when he placed Reverdy in the tradition of still life, not just in the cubist sense, but at the same time as the best & most shining continuation of what Mallarmé began in such strange neo-symbolist still lives as Autre éventail and Petit air. (Rexroth added Coup de dés, but I don't quite see that one that way.)

Anyway here is how I think to paint these still lives of mine.

The cubist ice blues--think of Wyndham Lewis's portraits, but also Demoiselles d'Avignon; and in order to be those very colors, they have to be accompanied by some siennas and soft browns.

[This last one was Sitwell, close with Stein.]

Somehow I'm thinking of the cup of coffee and whatever surrounds it, whether in a given photo I've taken or a given pile of such images, biscotti or spoons, saucer, a coffee mill, Duchamp's maybe;

these things somehow may be on a hexagonal Rublev table, somehow piling themselves into a Chardin pyramid form;

[I want to add that, right now, because of the things read in the last week and noted above, things about clarity and mysticism, when I say “cubist” I in fact mean Gris and Reverdy first, and Picasso and Braque only after. Because Reverdy’s art is (obviously) as close as one can get to my own (see, just for example, the Warnock citation from En Vrac which has long since attached itself with Hantaï at the deepest of my heart, but also via Démolition au platane etc. his “image” defintion being the condensation of the Surrealism (and no other) which Hantaï and myself actually take as point of departure); and because of Gris’s luminous clarity and, somewhere deep, behind the surface, his mysticism which locks him into step with what really matters here, if the distinction is between finding (trobar) beauty and then letting (gelassen?) it be present (this is the Nancy-Hantaï way, as in their 2022 jointure), on the one hand, and expressing art with an assertion of creatorship and a fixation on authorship; I say this again below (and have said several times, including on 25 April 2024, which is in “painting / re-Symbolism,” when I put it as “I may ultimately be able to find security in the bottom-line that our [that is, mine and Grotjahn’s, but this goes for Picasso too in Grotjahn’s place] practices are fundamentally differently oriented: I’m more interested in discovering (revealing, making-present) something about the experience of being (perhaps somewhat more similarly to Hantaï and Reverdy and Nancy), whereas he is (I don’t know!) interested more than anything else in saying (revealing, making-present) something about authorship, art, and beauty, and expression.”]

and I am imagining around the base of this pyramid, which is to say around the hexagonal table, there are reflective facets in orbit. Maybe they are in orbit at multiple altitudes: It's just below the height of the table surface, and somewhere above the coffee; and these facets are the dazzling sprays of color that Messiaen invoked for his Petites liturgies de la présence divine, those birds and the ways in which he saw them (as I once put it: “a field of light in which the shattered dazzling turns of color, exposed only as the brilliantly red or green or blue or golden-yellow side of the belly, or top of a wing, is exposed to the eye in an impressively sharp turn at full speed of a small bird in the fullest strength of its coloration”). He lists colors, I think, and I can take his colors, or I can take colors from a specific corpus (like Vilmos Zsigmond’s lens flares, for example) or--and maybe this is a separate still life--the colors can be those of the particular drawing of Mayan gods, the set of drawings of Mayan gods that I found (I think) on Wikipedia

(in the law library, some time after an exhibition at the Kimbell), and these orbiting facets can have those colors in their full intensity, either the greatest saturation that I can manage or the closest to those colors in the image, the actual image being present in these crystalline facets just in the way in which Messiaen's synesthetic flashes of color appear, not conforming to the forms of the drawings or only conforming to those forms in detail so magnified as to become abstract.

("Original work by Xjunajpù.")

And then, I'm not sure how the space works, but I think there is to be a surrounding wall, some kind of retable, iconostasis, a concave manifold mimicking in negative the form of the hexagonal surface upon which the still life is set; and this manifold can have the Mayan drawings in their actual form, tiling it in a (notionally) uninterrupted scheme, but perhaps interrupted so as to become an authentically re-Symbolist superposition-manifold in its own right; and these drawings, which ought to be recognizably Mayan, I think must be either in a sort of cubist-derived grisaille (as in just those dull ice blues and dulled browns), or, if not in that kind of grisaille, then they ought to retain just shadows of the colors, which are gathered in the Messiaen-flashes on the facets in orbit--if the latter, then these colors just echo in the background as touches inmixed into, or underlaid under, the cubist colors that are to define this field (by "field" I mean this arrière-plan manifold).
In terms of other variables to tinker with and realize in different ways:
I've talked of this one as having its primary items sitting on a hexagonal table; this could be sourced in, as I mentioned, Rublev, but there's also a painter (Quintessa Matranga) who was exhibited alongside Libby Rothfeld I think the one with the beer that could be there; and so could various perspectival systems superposed: axonometry, and the reverse perspective of Rublev, and also (in the sense in which this isn't just axonometric) the viewing-conditions of the space of Persian miniatures.

This panel, I'm thinking, will be cubist size, and in portrait orientation.
Another thing I mentioned is Chardin's framboises built of the pyramid and, in mentioning this, I am pointing to that conceptual-procedural framework I described once (at length, on 20 May 2024), which is in the ‘painting / re-Symbolism’ line now. Maybe I do use this method to conjure this table form, or maybe I don't, I don't know, but in any case this procedure is open to working out in many different ways, so I could use it in all of my still lives and each time come to a new superposed-prismatic form, each time anew.
But all this so far is still not enough.
The armature still needs to be more inhabited:
As reflections in the facets, maybe, or in some other way, there ought to be a color-drenched world-plane percolating or populating it; in “color-drenched” I’m thinking of the psychedelic plumes from Monika Baer’s Mozart pictures. This color-drenched backworld is to be seen in glimpses through the Mayan tiling (that screen or scrim), maybe. The point of this is that in that color-drenched world are forms like those in Pink Angels: maybe there and in the reflections in the facets is where the little Ariel beings live, those beings brimming with erotic life acted out in abstract recombinatory marionette-sketch. In any case they have to live somewhere, I think, in every painting I make. And so I still think I need to learn Kricfalusi’s line before I finish this painting.

And as far as being able to make more after I make this one, if this one just contains a picture of Duchamp’s chocolate grinder or his coffee mill (maybe, by the way, the format of this whole painting can match that of the coffee mill diagram of his, and the lines of that diagram can be intermittently taken up as the curves determining which plane is realized at a given locus), if, as I

was saying, that coffee mill just shows up here as a picture or as a drawing or in the diagram role I last described, then this opens up other ways in which such Duchamp machines can afford continuity into others still lives.
For example, if it's the coffee mill diagram, the very vertical one in this first one, then in some other one, it can be the chocolate mill taking on a more spatializing role as the central armature determining the vertical axis and the rotational orbit; and in still others I can proceed along more of Duchamp's lines--really I just mean with the assistance of those drawings, made by someone else (yes: "Les illustrations ont été réalisées par Jean-Louis Couturier, sous le nom d'A. Jihel, sur une modélisation de son père, Michel Carrouges"), I think, actually, but in an exemplary Duchamian vein, in connection to a series of Surrealist and Surrealist-adjacent authors (there's one about an island reminiscent of that from The Tempest; I think there was one about that super-man novel that may or may not be by Alfred Jarry (yes: Surmâle); and so forth).

[How did Duchamp and Couturier draw these? It is imperative that I find out.

In passing I add that le Corbusier spoke of "tracés regulateurs" which, while I still can't figure out what is meant, might mark a trail to a tools-solution of the same kind I seek.
The deliciousness that Baer charges incomparably in a detail like the traits at top left in the painting pasted below could be exquisitely achieved if things from my "textures" trobata were made to abut drawing like that described above between Duchamp and Couturier and le Corbusier, that painting abutting this drawing, which I am imagining on my aluminum, wood, and someday neoprene.]

Then, during work, I noted:

There is something embedded within what is probably my most incisive note on Grotjahn (which touches on Wood and Kusaka too; it is thus liable to be read, I see now, as pandering to a pantheon), the one which comes in "re-Symbolism" directly before 25 April 2025:
It is a note on fruits de mer still life, which, in its embedment within the site it is embedded in, and in the formalist / structural impulse it encodes, to be a an enormously rich "next step" / epochal shift / major turn / (a better term for this is to be found in the Grotjahn note itself) in my new neo-Symbolist still lifes.

(And, earlier during work, I made the following notes continuing in this vein:)

A word to link the newly-conceived still lives to my note in "painting / re-Symbolism" about (what really needs to be specified as) private dandyism; also, maybe this can all be synthesized together, but gathered in that same document are important comments about Ashtary, and also the incipient "espresso cup" idea; and then there is the recent addendum re. oscillation and induction.

(This last is, maybe, a much more minor footnote:)

Maybe eventually an Amazon Basics (or Whole Foods "O" brand?) coffee bag finds its way into one of these still lifes, in the spirit of (I probably paste too much, don't know where the relevant part starts / ends):
"The reason why I am so concerned with this push-pull force is easy to explain. It has to do with the deployment of push-pull forces by all agents--from the advertisers who made the L.A. billboards Warhol saw in the 60s up to the engineers at Tiktok--exerting the violence of (optical) fascism on living persons today. Perhaps more specifically, the reason why the tension charging these contours (and the retinal burn of certain color juxtapositions, and the scopophilia of certain patterns and palettes) is such a singular object of my interest (rather than a more broad sociological view of all the various Control techniques mobilized in concert by Google and Amazon and Facebook and all the rest) is because these particular sites I've zeroed in on--the contour energy, the color charge--are little tears that beget a traversal between the otherwise (apparently) more cordoned domains of painting (art, personal meaning, existential valuation and person-orientation by means of object-referents) and life-in-the-world (such as it is exposed to the hungriest and most sharply-toothed forces in the world of late capital--forces to which people seem generally happy to expose themselves, operating under the illusion of the absence or at least non-prevalence or at very least not all-consequential life-threatening status of such tears as these today). But because I've spent so long and tried so hard to gaze clearly upon the webs which constitute my reasons for remaining in the world, connected such as they are to (just for example) my personal image of the love I received from my mother and the image of terror-love which grips my heart at the thought of my father's death and the image of memory-space at

Canterbury Ct (both inside and on the golf course, the precise sites at which I came into my actual & current image of the way in which children grow as persons (certainly born with the BeVelles, resurfacing now with Fennec, ongoing and to-be-most-important when I have children of my own) and my actual & current image of what it is to be happy (the space and the color and the posture on the grass), respectively), because I have rendered these things at least sufficiently clear to myself, I see how they, as images, are put absolutely into play by such tears, and this is the most terrifying realization one can have. / I hoped somehow to describe a way in which I can use painting as a site to expose an "erotics" of what these tears permit. To show these forces in play upon the specific object-referents on which I hang the significance of my own embodied existence (in the accrochage model of personhood), upon all the objects and surfaces and beings (the dog, the duck, the baby, the parent, the friend, the spouse, that purple fruit in Kauai, and that scattered set of paintings) which mean everything to me."

And finally, after arriving home and assembling all the above:

What I am stuck on, now, is the question of whether a certain kind of beauty--a Bach beauty, which is also a Grotjahn beauty and a Stein beauty, one that bowls you over and also feels like the scratching of an itch gradually encompassing (by turns) every tissue of your body-mind, that feels like it proceeds in the sawing of a bow on the strings of a cello or on the strings of a quartet all at once in perfectly tight unison.

There is an entire ideology registered with immaculate faithfulness in the careful plotting-out and then in the august carrying-out, with all sense of inevitability, of any such perfectly-deliberate system in full swing: all of Grotjahn feels like this, and Stein said of her Making of Americans (when her published sent someone to figure out whether the author was "imperfectly educated") that "everything that is written in the manuscript is written with the intention of its being so written and all he has to do is to print it and I will take the responsibility" (in The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas).

Do I count Mozart too, and Beethoven, or just Bach? (The comparison for Stein, the one that flattered her and that was repeated in The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, was just Bach.)

The question is whether this sort of thing sits well with me on a level of person and practice, of habits and practics and taste. It is no question that this kind of thing, the playing-out on all pipes and strings available, is precisely what my "painting / re-Symbolism" notes call for, the finding of a suitable armature and its subsequent playing-out to the absolute full, the charging of every variable by these declensional means, more-or-less workmanlike, fabbro, or even marionettist-mechanical means, that is, whose function is to show the Nancy-bursting wonder inherent in every interstice of the fibrous world, to show, to present, not to genius-express nor to create nor to perform, but just to let-play-out and then to let to be, to let to bear witness.

I do think, right now, that the passions latent in a person that leave them capable of aesthetic ecstasis (utter ravishment) in this vein are strong in me as they hardly are in any other. It may be that, as temperaments go, mine is maximally suited to this.

I think, if this turns out not to be the case, then the alternative, the opposite, is represented by something I reread this morning, something said of Lukas Quietzsch: "One unit goes green: in Quietzsch paintings there is always an exception to all possible rules, suggesting an affiliation with anarchy."

I just couldn’t help pasting these images because I love them.

I think there is a way, if I pareidolize just right (just at the right stage, just at the right height of abstraction), that I can carry forth my pink panther idea as another of these still lifes.

[Addition 14 May 2025:]

What I’ve been calling still life’s are not still, anything but “morte”; really, they’re situations, and further only diagrammable on an extremely open basis

And yet nor are they “situations,” for they are inhabited, fully; and moreover, they have all the crystalline superposition-locking in exquisite alignment that is the definitive ideal of the very best still lifes

14 May 2025

Juan Gris, quoted in a not-very-good lecture by a curator of an exhibition of his work at the DMA, articulates a theory of art that expressly trades the mirror (and bypasses the lamp) for a direct, simple, and explicit Symbolist (and therefore also by extension re-Symbolist) account: fabbro.

“I try to make concrete that which is abstract. I proceed from the general to the particular, by which I mean that I start with an abstraction in order to arrive at a true fact. [...] Cézanne turns a bottle into a cylinder, but l begin with a cylinder and create an individual of a specific type: I

make a bottle-a particular bottle-out of a cylinder. [...] That is why I compose with abstractions (colors) and make my adjustments when these colors have assumed the form of objects. [...] This painting is to the other what poetry is to prose."

The very last statement is useless, but the rest is perfect.

It is precisely this which aligns him with Revery and with

Reverdy adds nuanced insight as to how the "starting with an abstraction" works, though. It is off course not as simple as "beginning with a cylinder." To "compose with abstractions (colors)" involves a complicated turning of interior, dream, sensibility, contingency (and chaos, if you like), and the world.

Pierre Reverdy by Jean Schroeder (who has certainly done valuable work, though I disagree persistently with certain readings / language of hers, particularly re. the poet's religion):

Post-symbolist still entangling productively in the working of the interior in relation to exterior (what I mean is, this Apollinaire quotation shows that Cubism is really a deepening of Symbolism, a refinement of Symbolism's program of accessing the interior, by way of realizing that the way into the interior is at the border-site where it becomes inmixed with exterior, i.e., in perception. The terms I'm using are imperfect, but if you want the best ones you have to go to Heidegger, and then you've gone to Heidegger.)

"One of the strongest influences throughout Reverdy's early poetry was provided by the art movement known as cubism. The new generation of poets with which Reverdy allied himself viewed the declining symbolist movement with great disenchantment. Instead of the symbol and its implied withdrawal from reality, they chose the most quotidian objects in order to effect a return to the physical world." The commonplace objects seen in cubist still lifes were drawn not for the purpose of imitation or objective representation, but rather as an illustration of the artist's conception of what newspapers, tables, guitars, etc. really looked like, when isolated from the dictates of society. Apollinaire, acting as spokesman for the cubist painters and poets in his Chroniques dart, viewed cubist art as one based upon an interior, intellectual reality, as opposed to more traditional art, founded upon objective reality and perspective"

Here is more of what I was talking about with Reverdy's efforts to examine and articulate the extremely complex relation / "turning of interior, dream, sensibility, contingency (and chaos, if you like), and the world" in the artist. Along the way use is made of the figure of the room--with a nearly-diagrammable topology and a set of functional motions begetting productive "gestural" analysis (can a wall, a room, a ceiling, have gesture? These do); these figures deserve separate comment. (Also along the way, he makes use of crucial (re-)Symbolist figures, folds and the fabbro (by way of his attribute, the anvil).)

"The theme of passage from one sphere of reality to another, treated in "Tentative" as an exterior flight from the banality of the everyday world in order to seek a superior intellectual and

artistic potential, is presented in "Bande de souvenirs" as an interior descent into the poet's/ voyager's subconscious in order to define his self's inner being. Briefly mentioned in "Tentative," the figure of the room serves as a vehicle for this type of passage and is usually found, as in this example, in a psychological context. The poem begins with a description of a statue, that of Mary Magdalene, which is located "Dans la chapelle au bord des routes" ("In the chapel at the edge of the roads," [469]), a site providing further reference to Reverdy's use of the horizontal line as a means of orientation and structure. The chapel along the road changes to a place of refuge in the mind, the inner sanctuaries which are reflected in the folds of Mary Magdalene's dress: "Sa robe en plâtre fait des plis/aux replis que l'âme redoute" ("Her dress of plaster makes folds/in the recesses which the soul fears"). Reverdy superimposes, here, a psychological view or pay-sage (“'countryside") upon a physical view, a technique reminiscent of cubist tradition. The soul must confront the interior paysage, reassess its hidden values and convictions ("plis"), lying protected in its inner recesses ("replis"), for failure to do so may paralyze the intellectual faculties of the mind. When passage has occurred through the folds of material to the inner chambers of the mind, the reader discovers a crossroads, an interior crossroads, "En deux branches le ciel bifurque" (Into two branches the sky divides" [470]). The expression "deux branches" may indicate the two strata of existence between which the poet vacillates— the quotidian as well as the ethereally intellectual.* As a poetic figure the crossroads suggests that nothing has yet been resolved; that which lies within the inner sanctuaries of the soul has not yet been confronted. As the descent into the subconscious takes place, the poet must digest the material to which he is exposed, and decide what to retain or elim-inate:" "Pour en éparpiller les plumes/forge ton envie sur l'enelume" ("In order to scatter the feathers/forge your desire on the anvil"[470]).” (28-29).

And then here is even more of that “___,” perhaps the bulk of it: “The process of creation is dependent, then, upon transformation occurring within several interrelated spheres. Poetic change oceurs first at the intersection of dream and reality ("le rêve" and "la réalité" (18-19])." Reality refers first to material objectivity, the everyday world dominated by sensory perceptions. It is here that man in the Pascalian tradition is thrown out like debris, une épave, condemned for the present to make his existence meaningful while immersed in an alien environment. His future is likewise doomed, for he can only anticipate death. However, Reverdy also speaks of deep reality (*la réalité pro-fonde"), a realm located above the sphere of the concrete world and dominated by the infallible mind ("'esprit"): "C'est l'esprit qui, au delà de l'apparence qui arrête le sens, pénètre librement, jusqu'au réel, l'essence des choses" ("It is the mind which, beyond appearance which stops the senses, penetrates freely, to the real, the essence of things." It is in this new plane of existence, often called the real ("le réel"), that creation is realized. Having passed through the world of material objectivity and that of dream, the mind shapes the crystals of imminent poems (19)." The motion downward into dream and then upward into deep reality is reminiscent of the cycle descent/ascent of Rimbaud and Mallarmé. For Reverdy, dream leads down into a mine where he selects the best form of raw material which, upon ascension, will be transformed into perfect crystals: “--mais de les remonter au jour sous forme de lingots, sous forme de bijoux--” but to bring them back up to light in the form of bullion, of jewels." In spite of the potentially infinite treasures of the dream, and the intellectual refinement of deep reality, the poet may be tempted by sensory gratification in the everyday world. Yet, however generous rewards seem, this sphere of existence in fact offers the artist only uncertainty and solitude: “... --Cette marche incertaine et précaire sur le vide, aspiré par en haut, attire par en bas…” “—This uncertain and precarious step upon the void, aspired from above,

attracted from below ..." [19)). The process of poetic creation depends upon transformation, both in terms of successive locations and with regard to the role of the artist However, in Le Gant de crin Reverdy emphasizes the static quality of the realized poem--“ce qui est constant et permanent (“... what is constant and permanent..") (40)--and de-emphasizes in a manner reminiscent of the cubists, those aspects which are subject to change .ce qui n'est qu'apparent et fortuit, superficiel et accidentel" (“ ... what is only apparent and fortuitous, superficial, and accidental"), Accordingly, it is the static quality of art which places it in the realm of deep reality. Supporting the idea of constancy and permanence is the term equilibrium. A work of art is "un équilibre de forces, de forme, de valeurs, d'idées, de lignes, d'images, de couleurs" ("an equilibrium of forces, form, values, ideas, lines, images, colors" [46]) which opposes "le déséquilibre du mouvement" (“the imbalance of movement"), The artist must respect the limits of balanced structure, for static art is durable, lasting art” (114 - 115). There is in here a very real tension between the static and the dynamic, but I find this to be ultimately immaterial. It seems here that Reverdy staunchly opposes himself to what was, for Rilke, a breakthrough received as a gift from Hölderlin (see note below). But I think, even if this is so, that a resolution is achieved by distinguishing between superposed planes and the art-object holistically considered (even if this holistic consideration is never truly possible--one (one beam of light) can never traverse a prism from all directions at once--still my point holds). Crystallinity is achieved on that holistic level, whereas the Hölderlinian-Rilkean motion that is the very music of the world animates many or all of the planes superposed, and holds their superposition in a vibration that continues to vibrate even when harmony is achieved.

I want my figure of the lamp, originally incidentally put in play from a Kricfalusi sketch, to be repeated enough to take on this resonance; it already reminded me of Ashtary, whose objects, when they recur, accrue the gestural resonance of objects in cubist still lives, when they are really attended to, and the (apparently strong; why this is is beyond me) temptation to stereotype them into simple signs of “the everyday” is resisted. “The painter whose tableau may have inspired the text "Les Poêtes" ("The Poets") is unknown, but the source is most likely cubist. A more or less static description of one or possibly two figures structured upon superimposed planes is then juxtaposed with spiral movement which is ultimately neutralized. The scene begins at the position of a lamp and the oval brightness of its shade. Except for the circular movement which is inherent in the linguistic location autour de ("around")—the roundness of the lampshade which encircles the objects and the fig-ure(s) of the poem, the description is otherwise static” (34-35).

Schroeder continues, on the same jointure (I use this term, for just now, in place of “still life”): “As for the figure(s), there is surely one--a musician who does not stir and possibly another, reflected in the possessive adjective sa in the terms “sa tête.” Although the musician is described as sleeping, his hands are supposedly playing the violin: "Il dort; ses mains coupées jouent du violon pour lui faire oublier sa misère" ("He sleeps; his severed hands play the violin to make him forget his misery"). [It was just this aspect of the severed hands that initially made me note this passage, but on revisiting it it became quite clear how important was the greater unity to which belonged that bit of cartoon-physics (the severed hands which also remind me of a cartoon-aspected image I located in Rilke’s Malte Laurids Brigge, see note 25 April 2025 on pp. 39-40 in that book: “... This reminds me of the type of thing you can do only with puppet plays

(betraying Rilke's lifelong interest therein), or with cartoons (I hope ardently to be able to make it to Dustin Hodges at 15 Orient this weekend). "His brown, old, spotted visage turned from one to another, his mouth hung open and his tongue writhed behind his decayed teeth; then all at once this face was gone, and his grey head lay on the table, and his arms lay over it and under it as if in pieces, and from somewhere a withered, speckled hand emerged and trembled" (39-40). …).] It is possible that in this first paragraph there are three superimposed planes of reality: first, the head of a poet, of the musician, or of another artist at the lamp; second, the sleeping musician; third, the subconscious wandering of the musician as he perhaps dreams he is playing his instrument. The past participle coupées indicates that there is no question of a scene from conventional reality; what matters here is not the subjects themselves, but the text or tableau as a whole, and the separated hands which play the violin provide another dimension of reality, enhancing the autonomy of the poem as an entirety, the poem as an object" (35).

And just afterward, on the same work: "Movement starts at the beginning of the second paragraph, appearing as a series of half-completed circles, or more precisely, spirals: "Un escalier qui ne conduit nulle part grimpe autour de la maison" ("A stairway which leads nowhere climbs around the house" [34]). Here the verb grimper suggests the act of climbing around in a slow, delib. erate manner, similar to the motion of one drawing a clear, precise line. The absence of openings in the building diminishes the sense of context the paragraph does have, that is, the location of the house. In addition, it contributes a feeling of imprisonment or paralysis to the position autour de--if the poem has a conventional context at all, it is a linguistic one, with the few objects and figures existing in terms of being located around the lampshade and stairway, As the circular movement continues, the spirals are traced by hasty, abrupt gestures. However, the cyclical motion around, which they connote, remains unfruitful, since the shadows have fallen under the same malevolent spell as have the unproductive artists: " ...le musi-cien qui joue toujours du violon avec ses mains qui ne l'écoutent pas" (".. the musician who is still playing the violin with his hands that are not listening to him"). These last lines of the poem serve as the only link between the two paragraphs-between the static, cubist tableau of the beginning, and the anecdotal, spirited but aimless scene at the end. Each spiral will continue to pass around its predecessor …" (36).

In the last part of the above, I receive the impulse to "diagram Hölderlin's habitation of tower."

What I mean is these words give me the idea to diagram, in the manner of Couturier's planches for Machines célibataires, Hölderlin's late-in-life madness (it is Patrick McGraw of Heavy Traffic that I connect this image with), the "system" of his tower inhabited at the time, including circular / spiral motion that he's tracing etc.

Ongoing discussion of the wall as a "gestural" / "functional" figure (the wall, and also the room, and the ceiling; should they be considered as a jointure, parts of a greater manifold in relation to each other, or no? One reason why not is that maybe the wall is a long thing of cobblestones along a road at Solesmes, or something, at least at times):

I think what she's saying here goes some way toward establishing the wall (or the room, etc.) as a figure whose most important valences are these poetic gestures and functions, traversals of the wall, ways of looking at the wall, etc. In painting, establishing such a status for a figure is a different task with different means; I still don't quite know what they are, but I know Monika Baer succeeds in them. "In addition to the wall, another illustration of linear enclosure is found

in poems where the setting is especially linguistic in nature, a device which I have characterized as "linguistic location" in another study. A linguistic location is created by using prepositional phrases which suggest arrangements of abstract horizontal and vertical lines. It is a setting defined solely in the position denoted by its respective prep-ositions. The previously discussed poem "Les Poètes" (in Poèmes en prose) is an example of such a location; the circular movement of light around the oval lampshade encircles the room and its occupants, offering them protection, but also imprisoning them in an artistic void Then the circle is replaced by the spiral, as the stairway, appearing in the form of half-completed circles or spirals, climbs around the house, sequestering those inside. Shadows along the stairway trace the spirals, [etc. …]" (40 - 41).
Pp. 74-75: Gris homage is very important

Relation of all Reverdy's room-figurations (in Au soleil du plafond etc.) to Derrida's sublime ("high up, but still under, maybe just under") and Hölderlin; my own garret, my mountain / mist (that I always say I walk up into, unto disappearance, etc.: Ludovic
Jockeys and grooms might be good figures to make to pass through L's room, up high, but with a crucially important ceiling and distinctive window that I'd like to charge (in words and in painting) with the same manifold status that Reverdy's wall (and lucarne and plafond) take on (see Schroeder's discussion of Au soleil du plafond and Jockeys camouflés). Are these grooms and jockeys to be artists by other names? What about wolves? What about a third, more L.A. species of person? Or am I to charge all I've ever found in any artist (in the "painting / re-symbolism" doc, eg) into a figure (as bisexual as god or as an angel or as the mage in the Redon etching or as the philosopher of Schutz) which can hold all the valences of all art I've ever known (all those traces left on a wall - see Jockeys discussion) in his / her own hand-registration (-history): by means, perhaps, of a taxonomy like that I ideate in parallel to Grotjahn at that one energetic point in the "painting / re-Symbolism" doc.
Anyway in my still lives the wall is a hugely important figure, as manifold and important as it is for Twombly Farber Baer Martinez, say. There ought not always to be a "still life" (at least as conventionally understood) before this manifold. In other words, it might be time I stop calling them by that name and start calling them "paintings."

I liked these tiles; in their state, they reminded me of Magnus Peterson-Horner's cheese check.

Alec saw me take this picture, I explained that I loved them, and, true to form, he told me that he hates them, they stress him out, they definitely contain asbestos and release it whenever they crumble, so great care is to be taken to avoid this.

John K.'s motion notational arrows: different from ashtary's?

15 May 2025

An idea for another of my so-called still lives: on four or five or six small aluminum panels, what they are all to have in common is a laser transfer of a couturier-plate-style (that hand) drawing of, in frontal schematic/hieratic view, all the instruments that make up a string Quartet. (if there are variants of this, realize the different variants, in proper proportion and properly allotted.) One transferred on matte medium, one transferred on gesso, and so forth. Something else needs to be present in the drawing, making it realize a new crystalline state each time: details of Kricfalusi voluptuous-emotion (this is Klossowski's Fourier or Sade) curves, other Ariel's, etc. And I am seeing the wall manifold as almost a barcode, a tightly packed panel of vertical lines of color: in the initial conception, all the colors from monika baer's Mozart paintings; but one ought to have the colors of Godard's first name Carmen; and one ought to have the colors of the San Francisco marriage of Figaro stage setting, and so forth. Maybe also Raphael Egil's apartment as photographed for emergent interview. Etc. je vous salue Marie bathtub, my view of Lac léman in the rain (that one with my images of jazz), etc.

From Hölderlin Patmos:
Willows and sand - what an image
When Christ's countenance is mentioned as the pain of parting, in step with the fall of evening:
Love's sorrow, it is the same as in an Alba
Find his words for it but there is here a darkening of the sun as a Crucifixion image and it is dearly close to the eclipse over the Areopagus with pseudo-Dionysius
A note describes fate as like an algorithm; is there something of this within the Kleist marionettentheater's core of idea? Does it go back to Boehme?
"And yet the men grieved, now that evening Had come, and they were taken by surprise, Since they were full of great resolution, And loved living in the sun, And didn't want to abandon the

Lord's Countenance, which had become their home.
It had penetrated them like fire into hot iron, And the one they love walked beside them Like a shadow. …"

"Living images flourish deep / In the mountains as well"

I also really loved Hölderlin's "Remembrance":

"The northeast blows,
My favorite among winds,
Since it promises fiery spirit
And a good voyage to mariners.
But go now, and greet
The lovely Garonne,
And the gardens of Bordeaux,
Where the path runs
Beside the steep bank,
And the brook falls deep into the stream,
And a noble pair of oak and silver
Poplars look down from above.
I remember it well,
How the crowns of the elm trees
Lean over the mill,
And a fig tree grows in the courtyard.
On holidays
Dark-skinned women
Walk upon the soft earth, And in March,
When night and day are equal:
Cradling breezes waft
Across the gentle pathways, Heavy with golden dreams.
But someone hand me
The fragrant cup, Full of dark light, That I may rest.
It would be sweet
To sleep among the shadows.
It isn't good
To stay mindless
With transient thoughts.
A conversation is also good:
To speak the thoughts of the heart,
And to hear much of days of love,
And of deeds that occur.
But where are our friends-
Bellarmin and his companion?
Many are afraid to go to the source,

Since treasure is first found in the sea.
Like painters, they gather up earth's beauty,
And they don't scorn winged war,
Or to live alone for years
Beneath the bare mast-
Where the city's festivities
Don't brighten the night, nor
The sound of strings and native dancing.
But now the men
Have gone off to the Indies...
From the windy peaks
And vine-covered hills
Where the Dardogne
Comes down with the great Garonne; wide as an ocean
The river flows outward.
But the sea takes and gives memory,
And love fixes the eye diligently,
And poets establish that which endures."

And his "Mnemosyne":

"The fruits are ripe, dipped in fire,
Cooked and sampled on earth. And there's a law, That things penetrate in the manner of snakes,
Prophetically, dreaming on the hills of heaven.
And there is much that needs to be retained, Like a load of wood on the shoulders.
But the pathways are dangerous.
The captured elements And ancient laws of earth
Run astray like horses.
There is a constant yearning For all that is unconfined.
But much needs to be retained.
And loyalty is required.
Yet we mustn't look forwards or backwards.
We should let ourselves be cradled
As if on a boat rocking on a lake.
But what about things that we love?
We see sun shining on the ground, and the dry dust, And at home the forests deep with shadows,
And smoke flowering from the rooftops, Peacefully, near the ancient crowning towers.
These signs of daily life are good, Even when by contrast something divine
Has injured the soul.
For snow sparkles on an alpine meadow, Half-covered with green,
Signifying generosity of spirit in all situations, Like flowers in May-
A wanderer walks up above on a high trail And speaks irritably to a friend about a cross He sees in the distance, set for someone Who died on the path...

What does this mean?
My Achilles
Died near a fig tree,
And Ajax lies in the caves of the sea Near the streams of Skamandros-Great Ajax died abroad Following Salamis' inflexible customs, A rushing sound at his temples-But Patroclus died in the King's armor.
Many others died as well.
But Eleutherai once stood upon
Mount Kithaeron, the city of Mnemosyne.
Evening loosened her hair,
After the god had removed his coat.
For the gods are displeased
If one doesn't compose and spare oneself.
Yet a person has to do it, Or their grieving is misguided."

And the notes to it:

"This third version of Hölderlin's poem demonstrates the semantic complexity often characteristic of his late writing, and his ability to develop thoughts in a succession of metaphors and images-a process of metaphorical thinking in poetic narrative.
The question Hölderlin presents here is whether and how it is possible to retain historical memory of past events, exemplified by the deaths of the Greek heroes. Mnemosyne is the goddess of memory. She slept with Zeus and gave birth to the nine Muses, whose activities are also by nature historicizing.
Hesiod writes of Mnemosyne:
Them [the Muses] in Pieria did Mnemosyne, who reigns over the hills of Eleuther, bear of union with the father, the son of Kronos [Zeus], a forgetting of ills and a rest from sorrow. For nine nights did wise Zeus lie with her, entering her holy bed remote from the immortals. And when a year was passed and the seasons came round as the months waned, and many days were accomplished, she bore nine daughters, all of one mind, whose hearts are set upon song and their spirit free from care, a little way from the topmost peak of snowy Olympus. [Theogony 53-63, trans. Evelyn-White.]
And again, he [Zeus] loved Mnemosyne with the beautiful hair: and of her the nine gold-crowned Muses were born. [Theogony 915-917.]
Pindar also writes about Mnemosyne:
If success crowns a man's venture, sweeter then than honey the libations he pours into the Mousais' [Muses'] stream. But lacking the songs to praise them, the mightiest feats of valour can but find a sorry grave a deep darkness. But for fine deeds a mirror to establish, one way alone we know if Mnamosyna's [Memory's] shining diadem will grant recompense for their labours, in the glory of music on the tongues of men. [Nemean 7 ant 1, trans.
Conway.]
In the first strophe of Hölderlin's poem, the "fruits" are simply the deeds or events of history. Their memory disappears from our minds the same way that snakes crawl away into cracks in the

floor, or run between rocks. We need to remember things, but our memory is often faulty and can lead us astray like horses on crooked paths. Also there exists a tendency and a willingness to let things slide into forgetfulness because of our need to stay nested in the present and to not run away to the future or the past.
But what about the experiences of daily life, the common things we treasure and are left with even after we make contact with something that transcends earthly life? These are signs, like a cross planted in an alpine meadow, an act of generosity and a reminder, animating wayfarers to speculate from a distance about what happened there.
The last strophe places us in the mythic environment of Greece. The heroes at Troy died in various ways, and we owe our knowledge of them to the circumstance that Zeus slept with Mnemosyne on Mt.
Kithaeron-"loosening her hair" is a common metaphor for love-making in older literatures.
Thus historical memory itself is ordained by the gods.
When friends or heroes die, we need to pull ourselves together and conquer sorrow by creating a record of what happened.
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From Thomas the Obscure, this line, in isolation, has resonance applicable to Ludovic:

“... reminiscence, so that, as this false figure emerged from the shadows, acquiring through a useless meticulousness a greater and greater precision and a more and more artificial one, she herself, the narrator, already condemned and delivered into the hands of the devils, would bind herself unpardonably to the true figure, of which she would know nothing. / "What you are...," she said.... And as she spoke these words, she seemed to dance around him and, fleeing him at the same time, to push him into an imaginary wolf-trap. "What you are….”/ She could not speak, and yet she was speaking. Her tongue vibrated in such a way that she seemed to express the meanings …”

If i paint the Hölderlinturm i ought not make it explicit that it is that, just make the tower and the diagram and let that suggest the poet’s presence; the exterior of the Montreux place we stayed, and the exterior of Raphael Egil’s address: These textures can be maximally infused into that tower-motion-space and that will be that.

Tonight I made this; I like how it looks in these images, maybe more so than I like how it looks in the sketches I've so far made from it; They are arranged to be true to the seating in a real string quartet, but also hopefully to reminisce of de Kooning's "Father mother sister brother"--perhaps, in order to establish that better, in one of these I also need to pair that painting's forms-group with these.

16 May 2025

Heidegger (turning, etc)
Stein
Rilke
Reverdy (in his room, by a wall, up under the ceiling; see an article about spatial poetics?)
Holderlin?

Building up a compact lexicon of fundamental postures and gestures: each do it; is that what my "re-symbolism" project is really about?

Hearing this earlier this morning is what made me think of this:

> "La tonalité fondamentale. La poésie d'Hölderlin exprimerait une « tonalité » de fond ou «

tonalité fondamentale », en allemand « Grundstimmung », à laquelle Heidegger, notamment dans les Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis), reconnaîtra le privilège d'ouvrir un monde et d'accueillir, suivant son expression, « l'empreinte de l'Être » … .”

This sounded like exactly what I saw in what I called the “Stein-basic” palette.

The Tempest

Ariel: “fetch dew from — ?”

The cleft pine in which s/he was prisoned: Acephale

“Lest too light winning …”: whether in Art, or in Sacher-Masoch: Love needs love’s sorrow; it’s a “feed-forward” (poor word) system (think of my recent kind of paired disc-tracing arrows

Miranda “servant (whether you will nor no),” “maid” etc: Beautiful love

Ceres etc. (Incl. Venus): this ou-topic mi-lieu, interlude, is the perfect space for art, the tensed space of the superposition-panel; moreover, its structure and texture are so alike to those of the Poeti latini

“Time goes upright”?

Lime-grove

“Were I human” (Ariel); “that art but air”

Ariel’s last song

I think I've got it: the horse dealers that he has to ring up, and that he has to go out and see (maybe because of an "uncle" who may or may not be the omnibenevolent magus; maybe he has to go out and see them at a former hotel with ornate wrought-brass grille and buzzer system from the 1920s, from just after the war which in this 30s-moment (this is where we are, at times, though it is unstated) is still called "the war") and not transact with (and every time he sees them he remains chaste, it seems, an utterly static commitment in speech, and yet it becomes unclear the next time around whether he has really transacted with them), they are to be the embodiment of everything deadened, everything that is capital, everything that is kitsch, everything that is commodified, everything that misses aesthesis unredeemably.

They always ask him doesn't he want to deal in horses, and he always has to tell them no, he longer deals in horses, no, he never dealt in horses; and they tell him but you are only seventeen, you have a beautiful career in dealing horses ahead of you, a face as clear and a body as lithe and a frame as neutrally august as yours cannot be allowed to pass this world (of horse dealing) by without making good on all of the advantage nascent in it; and he has to tell them, again and again, I do not deal in horses. And I am not seventeen any longer. (Though somehow it must be that he is getting even younger: when next they insist, they are insisting that he is sixteen, that they were just consulting his medical records (what checks do they perform on racehorses?) and--what athletically pure numbers, by the way--they were certain, they had to look twice because they could have vouched they were quite certain he had been seventeen, but, yes, it's true, they checked, his date of birth appeared on each page in the same lower corner, they remember it well, and did he know by the way that he shares it with __ (someone a stand-in for 22 Sep Blanchot, or Michelangelo's birth chart or Mozart or van der Goes or Hölderlin or so forth). …

The horse dealers bring to him all thoughts frictional, all that is frictional, all that chokes me, all the strain I've ever registered in these documents: They are to bring it to him, so that all that is born of Ludovic, all that comes through him from out of the empty space as whose conduit he is perpetually situated, is nothing but the fruit of the pure in spirit, nothing but pure spirit itself.

The horse dealers offer him always visions of the pearl-encrusted and gold-inlaid allure that is his rightful inheritance, that he must not only decline but whose allure he must negate unto (and through) vanishing, and he must bear witness to this in his declining while experiencing no magnetism (and it would be known if he did).

Perhaps it is in the exchanges with the horse dealers that I, like Klossowski (in Le souffleur? I think it was in "Prose of Actaeon" that this was pointed out, or maybe it was in some other preface or postface), can cycle through all the formalisms of formal (scholastic? legal? Logical? No: formal) language, all the forms which conjugate the wide array of rhetoric-standard propositional possibility in the conjugational register. And these are to be experienced, by the reader, as frictional sites of resistance met and pushed-beyond on the way to and from the unional instances of contact with the void which, I still think, are to have my found-and-posed letters to Belle as their stand-in--sites of friction met and pushed through on the way to each of these tangent-points from the sensory-detail-attention-fixation and unlimited-zoom and free-conjunctive image-language dreamland, and on the way thence back to it, too.

17 May 2025

A random review of a translation of Rilke by Louth gives terms that are, humblingly, as good as any I've been able to wrest from Rilke (though this is not, of course, what I read him for, still it is invaluable to add to things like the idea of Rilke's vocabulary of gesture that ___ gave me):

"but Rilke comes to see poetry's temporal nature not as something to be lamented and combated, but as its strength, what "allows it to enter into and elucidate the movement of life". Years later, the unfolding of the Duino Elegies is just this: an initial lamentation at the transience of life, turning slowly towards celebration of that fact. Rilke learned from Hölderlin's abrupt style, his winding, fractured or abbreviated syntax. The poem 'To Hölderlin' (1914) praises him and sets out a programme for Rilke himself. This is Louth's translation:

'To linger, even on what we know best,
is not for us; out of the fulfilled
pictures the spirit pitches to ones now to be filled; lakes
are only in eternity. Here falling is
the best we can do. Out of a feeling we've learnt,
falling onwards into one we divine, further.'

Louth argues, "What Rilke apprehends in Hölderlin and works into the form of his poem to him, is movement itself, the poem as a passage 'felt in departures'. It is 'Herz-Werk' in that it traces the flexion of time". / … The poems are not elegies in any formal or traditional sense but about the kind of loss that had always been Rilke's subject: the necessary loss of our necessary preconceptions about the world so that we can (if only passingly) experience its ultimate nature as a wholeness of being. The angels who make brief appearances stand for all that we are not (but might briefly glimpse). The lack of self-consciousness Rilke perceives in animals – their capacity to see the Open ("das Offene") without reflection – proves an alternative way of critiquing the way we live. The acrobats in the fifth poem (the last to be completed) serve to suggest that life itself is "a questionable kind of performance, a contrivance, endlessly failing and having to be begun again". Once this is felt in the blood and we distance ourselves from a world view in which "theories, the conception of things, have come to dominate over the things themselves", then (as the seventh Elegy proclaims) "Just being here is glorious" ('Hiersein ist herrlich'). / The only chance of preserving such glory is (following Hölderlin) to ensure no particular interpretation of experience becomes "the fixed and solely valid one". The language of poetry becomes a way of "hooking ourselves to things, tangling ourselves in them" while retaining a sense of inevitable provisionality. So poetry reflects the nature of a life "improvised into a makeshift whole which acknowledges the complexity of life while also showing how it can still be experienced as a rich, meaningful practice." "

I said, somewhere, recently, that the undeniable overwhelming beauty that I want to make palpable in my art is simply that of the world ("the world" rather than "nature," "the divine" which Rilke and Holderlin both say is at once uncontainable even in the largest and fully present

even in the smallest, being therefore something related to what Nancy and Teilhard both try to specify in words as the (convergent?) incomprehensibility (surpassing the human —"human excess") of the very small and the very large).
I add that it is in one way the simplest matter, to make this palpable; it is just looking: there is nothing easier. And yet something in ourselves and something monstrous that we make conspire to make this easiest into the hardest. What Rilke describes here is the overcoming of these (of that part in ourselves, and of that monstrous creation of ours: algorithm, capital, the premise of liquidation and exchange, let loose to wring our optic nerves for all the attention-currency they are worth). It has quite all the drama, but not necessarily anything like the Herculean difficulty, that his verse (loading all the world's weight into the simplest sequences of words) gives to it.

I think Ludovic ought to be accompanied by a "wolf of a dog," said, maybe, near the end, and maybe only once, to never leave his side; probably it will be Maddie's malinois, described as with her unique way of walking, utter timidity, way of moving around less alike other dogs than to a Roomba or a praying mantis, but carrying with her everywhere, as a lithe glowing shadow, the august figure of the paragon of lupine domestication she could have been, instilling fear while exuding elegance, silent in spirit and silent in step, powerful but to no compromise of quickness. (Think also of the poet's dog in Nostalghia)

Besides Sint-Martens-Latem there is Attert, the richest municipality in Belgium by GDP per capita; Etalle, in roughly second place, with a beautiful name; these two are right along the Luxembourgish border. Then there is Kraainem, the wealthiest municipality in Flanders. But the Lampens house, the brutalist one with the wood-grain indulgence, the one I loved, which is exceeding even among its ideological peers for its resemblance to a bunker, is in Sint-Martens-Latem, outside of Ghent.

The house was renovated by the Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, which I've also been focused on recently; they are currently showing Calvin Marcus's skin paintings, and also painters from the

loose-knit community along the Leie in collaboration with the Museum van Deinze en de Leiestreek.

It appears that Kraainem is also notable for its architecture.

(It's not clear what town these last few are in.)

I'm in love with almost all the houses Hannes Coudenys has catalogued as "ugly Belgian." https://www.dezeen.com/2015/04/05/ugly-belgian-houses-hannes-coudenys-archive-unattractive-architecture/

The studio-home of Raoul de Keyser, through photographs and through his paintings, is quintessential.

It must be that Ludovic's home is the Van Wassenhove House by Juliaan Lampens, but perhaps it has aspects of these Kraainem houses; and that he has uncles in Etalle and Kraainem; the details, landforms, colors, plantlife, and public architecture (streets, sidewalks, forms of roadway network and footpath, marsh, snow) all derived from among all these places, with their distinctive and quite recognizable take on the "luxury modern villa."

(This "take" has something also shared with places in Ireland, such as Sligo or Wexford, the later due to someone named Lukas Hendriks, a USC student whom I met in two Beverly Hills galleries).

Alcools (what was I saying? Maybe that melons (golden, and cantaloupe) need to be in my paintings alongside Ricard, the things I drank last night, Occitan wine, Belgian and German beer, Jamaican rum, etc.)

18 May 2025

I think it would be good (I wilfully avoid—it takes much will—"would be cute" or "clever") to paint my wall, my painting wall; that is, after all, the wall I think of when I hear all that is said of Reverdy's wall that I think of as a manifold. Maybe it is not ever to be fully visible as-such, but just in limited aspects, in rotation. The window to the side of it, perhaps at night a candle in a place opposite the window's lower corner (le feu dans le coin: this was for Reverdy an image of the constantly renewed real, the source of warmth and life present in the interior of the world; for him it was presented in the negative, of course). The "subject" being the empty wall, but imperative to avoid being written off as tritely performatively self-reflexive: it is precisely that in order for this painting to have come out the wall had to not be empty (as it is shown), thus there is a pleasurable contradiction-vibration (and harmony therein) between the fact of the painting's presence and the image made present of the empty wall—room for that, "first," alongside room for, as I see it, all the other things I want to put in there, e.g. the sticky friction of the impulse to aestheticize in a facile and fruitless way and the impulse to arstheticize in the deep and necessary way; the photographs I've taken of my wall, and of my art materials (the juicy ones, with their light), in the past, apply tension to this tightrope

19 May 2025

Rilke's Sonnet II, 14, I think, would make a perfect epigraph to my oscillatory work; perhaps just the last six lines, or perhaps my own translation of the last six lines, so it doesn't have to say "meadows" (I'd translate it "clearing," and I'd probably have to change some other things, too). But do they read well enough on their own, or do they need the "Look at the flowers," etc.?

"Look at the flowers, so faithful to what is earthly,
to whom we lend fate from the very border of fate.

And if they are sad about how they must wither and die,
perhaps it is our vocation to be their regret.

All Things want to fly. Only we are weighed down by desire,
caught in ourselves and enthralled with our heaviness.
Oh what consuming, negative teachers we are
for them, while eternal childhood fills them with grace.

If someone were to fall into intimate slumber, and slept
deeply with Things--: how easily he would come
to a different day, out of the mutual depth.

Or perhaps he would stay there; and they would blossom and praise
their newest convert, who now is like one of them,
all those silent companions in the wind of the meadows."

20 May 2025

Today, having planned this for maybe a week (planned to purchase a cantaloupe, finally cut it tonight three days after buying, because Bella had opened the Barboulot bottle for our spaghetti), I retrieved the relevant Brazilian late-Modernist whose name never comes to me but whom I always remember by a bottle of wine and a palette, and constructed this arrangement; the photographs before the still life is before looking again at the painting (about which, beforehand, I could not have said whether its fruit was cantaloupe, orange, or something else entirely), the one after, from after.

21 May 2025

[20 May 2025:]

Notes to Body of Beatrice up to p. 61.

This is a near-perfect instance of what I've been saying recently in many different ways, and re-finding in my notes in the "painting / re-Symbolism" doc, regarding my understanding of successful art as that which shows the beauty that already exists in-the-world (this phrasing is not great, neither by the standards of good phenomenology, nor by my own). 5-6: "... the opening metaphor in chapter 1, sometimes called the "proem," which compares the author to a scribe copying and editing the words he finds written in the book of memory. … The retrospective view of the past thus enables the protagonist to become the enlightened narrator who, like a scribe, transcribes the sentenzia, or meaning, of what lies behind him in the book of memory. / Time, then, functions as a principle of revelation. The beginning of the narrative is linked to the end, forming a circle of intelligibility in which the meaning of the narrated events stands revealed. Revelation constitutes the true story of the Vita Nuova as its protagonist gradually comes to realize that the signs associated with Beatrice concealed a transcendent mean-ing. At the time he lived through the events, he could not ap prehend these signs as signifiers, let alone grasp their significa-tion, but just as time bridges the gap between protagonist and narrator, so too it bridges the gap that separates these signs from their true meaning, closing the hermeneutic circle, as it were. With the circle's closure comes the revelation that Beatrice's appearance on earth was a miracle."

But this was the reading of Singleton, which Pogue Harrison contests, on the following grounds. Pogue Harrison's riposte, incidentally, affords a very close alignment with my idea, currently underway, for my blank-panel-on-the-wall as theme fruitful enough for multiple paintings. "The most distinctive feature of the Vita Nuova, after all, is that its author does not end his narrative but effectively interrupts it with a promise that he will accomplish at a later date what he has not managed to accomplish in the libello. A dramatic failure, an avowed authorial inadequacy, haunt the end of this work. It is hard to see what circle gets closed with the death of Beatrice when the

narrative follows a linear trajectory that projects the story into a temporal future at the end of the work."

Here is Dante's vision, the one which occasioned a very closely related idea for a painting (the vision itself arrived to me with a clarity and strangeness unattended even for Dante, a sticking power, in other words, not that Thomas's terms (clarity, etc.) are necessarily to be shed): "Beatrice is eighteen years old and walking along a street between two women. Dante perceives her as dressed in white: "Questa mirabile donna apparve a me vestita di colore bian-chissimo" (i, 1) l'This miraculous lady appeared to me dressed in purest white"]. Beatrice offers a public greeting, inducing a strange state of inebriation in Dante, who had never heard her utter words before. He removes himself from the street to the privacy of his bedroom ("lo solingo luogo d'una mia camera," which recalls the "secretissima camera de lo cuore" that felt the effects of Dante's first vision of the nine-year-old Beatrice in the preceding chapter), and as he thinks about the courteous lady. he falls asleep and has a "marvelous vision": A fiery mist fills his room, through which he discerns the "lord" of love, fearsome in aspect, who declares that he is Dante's master. Of the many words the lord speaks-they are in Latin-only some are com-prehensible. In the lord's arms sleeps a woman, naked except for a crimson cloth [tno drappo sanguigno] wrapped loosely around her body. Looking at her intently, Dante recognizes the lady who had greeted him that same day. In one of the lord's hands Dante sees a flaming object, Dante's burning heart ("Vide cor tuum," says the lord). The lord wakes the young woman in his arms and forces her to eat of the heart. She consumes it reluctantly. The lord, who before seemed joyful, now begins to weep bitterly as both he and Beatrice seem to vanish upwards toward the sky." (17).

Here is how I noted the idea for the painting: "Panel of a silverpoint Bella with a life-painted red veil: "The vision of Dante" or "Visione dantesca" (check grammar; I intend the subtle double entendre or, rather, the flickering of meaning between two readings of this pair of words)"

Here is what the vision makes Pogue Harrison think: "Who is this lord? Why is Dante's heart burning in the lord's hand? Why is Beatrice, against her will, forced to consume the heart? What does this consumption mean, and why does it bring about a change of disposition in the lord's humor? If the dream harbors some deeper meaning that would explain its figures and narrative logic, that meaning remains concealed. And deliberately so, for an essential dimension of the dream's much-sought-after meaning is its hermeneutic defiance: "Lo verace giudicio del detto sogno non fue veduro allora per alcuno, ma ora e manifestissimo a li più semplici" (ut, 15) l'"The true meaning of this dream was not seen by anyone at the time, but now it is manifest to even the most simple-minded"]. By making such a declaration and yet refusing to disclose the dream's "true mean-ing" for his reader, Dante seems deliberately to have preserved for us the dream's most essential quality, namely, its hermeneutic provocation" (19-20).

Delightful physiology of the sort Lugli revealed to me, in classes and in his Botticelli book, The Hair is Full of Snares: "The response by Dante da Maiano, a Florentine poet and physician, is more coherent only to the degree that he refuses to interpret the vision. In an ironic sonnet ("Di ciò che stato sei dimandatore"), he advises Dante to wash his testicles with plenty of water to

disperse the noxious vapors that bring on the delirium of such visions (*che lavi la tua coglia largamente, / a cio che stinga e passi lo vapore / lo qual ti fa favoleggiare lo-quendo"). But by opting for an erotico-phantasmal etiology, da Matano merely skirts the challenge of making sense of Dante's Vision."

More on the vision; these are precisely the grounds on which I have Bella's arm in the first-begun of these empty-panel-wall-manifold paintings: "The veil sends the eve through the veil and allows the body to appear as the image figured by the veil itself. We have here the very genesis of the figure of Beatrice-her poetic potentiality. Beatrice is not the name of an ordinary woman, nor a senhal that provides the poet with a set of traditional poetic conventions to imitate, revise, or mannerize. Her name refers to a unique historical experience that exceeds containment by the Provençal and Italian lyric traditions that Dante inherits at the outset of his career. Beatrice means an inaccessible corporeal density made accessible figurally and poetically, or, more broadly speaking, phenomenally. The "marvelous vision" provides a unique insight into the initial impulse of Dante's literary vocation in the way it depicts an originary event of pheno-menalization whereby the body of Beatrice gives itself not in itself but in its figurative re-presentation in and through the veil that covers it. In other words, the presence of the drappo san-guigno becomes genetic. We may even say that it engenders the presence of every other figure in the dream: the lord of love, for instance, the burning heart, and its consumption."

"Dante's dream" chapter up to bottom p 21: Can I rewrite this sentence by sentence (w necessary trimming), but in reference to my own vision received whole, "chaque jour"?

This is a deft sensitization of precisely what planes and lines were active, to me, when the vision arrived to me. What's more, this defines a tropological locus I would like to lean into, stay within, cogitatae within and work within: The fragmentation, the metonymy, the ingestion, to put all of this maximally antiseptically. "Thus, in one of his hands he holds the veiled Beatrice; in the other he holds a flaming emblem of passion. The reversal whereby the erotic or even phallic fire of the heart is consumed by Beatrice figures as a dubious consummation of desire brought on by the lord, for instead of a consummation we have a momentous incorporation of the heart into the withdrawing body of Beatrice. / The flaming heart consumed by Beatrice is a remarkable trope. The heart introduces through metonymy the narrator's presence in the dream. Except for this heart, Dante is altogether absent from the vision. His real presence is as the spectator outside the vision for whom the scene plays itself out. But within the dream, he figures only in and through the emblem of his passion. He sees himself metonymically condensed, as it were, in the figure of a heart burning in the hand of the terrifying lord. His active desire gets reduced to a passive impotence and castrated by the overdetermined circumstance. / The flaming object tropologically condenses the raw urgency of desire but at the same time does it not also represent a sinister fragmentation? The extraction of the lover's heart from his body and the heart's consumption by the beloved is a recurrent motif in medieval literature, found in different versions throughout the fabliaux tales, for example …" (25).

“Flame colors”! I imagine keeping a flame burning in the corner while I paint, in propagation of that image (the flame in the corner) as it was in Reverdy (En vrac, was it?), and also to serve me as the iridescent foils served Bonnard: Source of color and texture and form, here, maximally evanescent, maximally untouchable, maximally vindicating Blanchot. “But while it evokes an image of girlish innocence and modesty in Dante's memory, the crimson color also provokes the darker forces of an unconfessed sexuality in the dream, for it would seem to dominate the entire chromatic spectrum of the dream's field of vision. This spectrum consists largely of fire col-ors. Visually the crimson seems to condense within itself the more diffused hues of orange which we imagine in the fire im-ages: the fire-colored mist as well as Dante's burning heart. The link between sanguigno and fire is reinforced by Purgatorio xxx where Beatrice appears to Dante dressed in "color di fiamma In an overt recall of this moment in the Vita Nuova." The chro? matic condensation of fire hues in the cloth's color turns the body of Beatrice into a genetic center of imaginary emanations organizing a metaphoric field of desire around itself” (27 -28).

“to say of her what has not been said of any woman”: Was I subconsciously but authentically echoing this when I said, repeatedly, and in fallenly comical terms concealing a deeply meant truth, “a monogamy the likes of which this world has not seen”?

This is Nancyean, in the highest: “Praise is without doubt the inner, nostalgic Vocation of poetry in general. Poetic praise allows that which is praised-the hero, the athlete, the statesman, the lady, the homeland, the mountains, the "lake effects," the seasons of nature-to reveal itself in its own essential light, which is not the light of poetry but which, without poetry, lacks the space to shine forth” (34).

Here is what occasioned (and immediately preceded) it: “... the poet's: resolve to write only laudatory poetry marks one of the dramatic turning points not only of the Vita Nuova but of European literary history in general, for the epideictic convention later crytallized by Petrarchism dominates literary practices for some two or more centuries after Dante discovers praise as the only language adequate for Beatrice." Dante, to be sure, does not invent the epideictic love lyric, but his discovery of it as a poetic vocation in the Vita Nuova remains an emblematic moment and, if nothing else, gives rise to the finest poems in the book, including the cantone "Donne ch'avete"” (34).

Aquinas’s aesthetics is undoubtedly to be shelved, for now, for me, but reading this makes it harder to shelve it than it has been, not least because of how alike it sounds to my own account of the prismatic art-object: “Thomas Aquinas conceived of beauty in terms of a paradoxical relation berween adequation and transcendence. Pulch-ritudo belongs among the transcendentals (ens, res, umom, ali-quid, bonum, and verm), but what makes it unique is that the beautiful "thing" unites these transcendentals within itself and allows them to shine forth phenomenally. Aquinas's word for this radiance is claritas. More precisely, claritas means the rad ance of form permeating a thing and adequating it to intelle tual apprehension on a human scale. Coming ultimately from God, it illuminates the material opacity of a thing so that, through the agency of

sense perception, the intellect may identify the thing by its form. The importance of the aesthetic category comes from the human intellect's inability to apprehend something apart from the agency. of the senses." Bur because we perceive through them, the senses for Aquinas are a cognitive agency, unlike, for example, the will. We know through sensation. In this respect we may say that for Aquinas beauty is always embodied and is always form's inhabitation of a material density: thus, it occurs essentially in entities" (40).

A painting that does the same would be a good objective-correlative for Dantescan stilnovism within the panorama of my alternative history of lyric (I think what made me say this is the last sentence here, but I'm not sure): "Let us reflect on the question, for it involves not only the essence of love but also love's topology. One of the peculiar characteristics of the Vita Nuova is the impression it creates of having originated from out of itself by virtue of its own autonomous visionary energy. The narrative insists on bracketing anything like a real world outside the poet's imagination in order to blur the boundaries between a public street and a private hallu-cination, between an actual event like Beatrice's death and a delirious dream that foreshadows it. Opacity, ambiguity, paronomasia, and allusion are some of the techniques whereby the book secks to represent not the facts of experience but the transformation they undergo in the phantasmal interiority of the poet's "memoria." As Cavalcanti had declared in "Donna me prega," love has its true place not in the external world but in this imaginary space of memory. But the fact is that the Vita Nova moves both inward and outward, from figure to body, from substance to image, from bedroom to street, and vice versa" (52).

[21 May 2025:]

Notes to Body of Beatrice pp. 61 - end.

There was this remarkable figure, the only one, I think, in the book; here is the accompanying text: "Figure 1 serves to illustrate the narrative containment of existential time in between two poles of transcendent vision.
The new life turns into a cosmic story. Progressing along the horizontal axis, it begins with the miraculous vision, continues in the present with the author's resolve to remain silent, and extends into a future in which he hopes to write of Beatrice what has never been written of any woman. It ends hypothetically with a second vision of Beatrice in her glory, thus closing the circle, or triangle, between one visionary moment and an-other. In both cases it is Beatrice's own vision that represents the "content" of vision. Meanwhile, between these two mo-ments, the horizontal axis of existential time becomes radically linear" (136).

In this, I am with Dante, and in that, I think, I am what my generation will best be. “Dante could not forgive Guido Cavalcanti his disdainful skepticism about the epic attempt to construe universal meaning in the freedom of poetic expression. With his acute analytic phantasmology of the self, Guido understood too much about the impossibility of a synthetic representation of the Real; too much about the seductive edifications of figurative language; too much about the intransitive nature of poetic vision. His psycho-poetry turns the figure back upon itself until it decomposes its own chimeric constitution and reveals its ontological emptiness. Where Dante, in faith and hope, risks the hyperbole and positsthe figure in acts of projection, Guido entraps the resources of poetry in the movement of introjection. His refusal of narrativity and his retreat into the private phantasmagoria of psycho-lyricism harbor a denial of the referential possibilities of representation” (167-168).

Corner diagram

Convivio idea, for Max’s new apartment: Everything has to have a drink in it. (Or something.) I will DJ, predominantly Palestrina; and the centerpiece is to be an almost-ritualistic imbibement; it is not an ape of the Eucharist, though there is obvious resonance to both that drink and to that of the Eleusinian mysteries, and to the meeting of the Apollonian (art) and the Dionysian (drink), a meeting that does otherwise than Nietzsche could account for, overwriting Nietzsche (what is it, anyway, that Nietzsche said of the two poles?).

Everyone, basically, is to get drunk; Enivrez-vous is to be read, to show that it is not just alcools which are in question.

I’d like to contribute one or more paintings on panels roughly a foot and a half wide and four and a half (or more) tall: A still life in the manner I conceived while listening to Stein, Dydo, Reverdy, and Mozart; the drink at its center is to be Ricard, maybe, maybe also Bénédictine, other absinthes for sure, maybe the alpine liqueur I drank at Little Dom’s, all my empty Tanqueray? (Am I now speaking of several paintings, and not just one, to let the acute differences hereamong shine out as brightly as possible?), but, at the center, or at least largest of all, most important, a bowl of stone appearing to hold water, this one alone lifted from another painting, one I saw in Dublin or London, this one alone to synecdochally enact the transmission of l’esprit that come from fabbri now extant only as ghosts, in their work that trickles down to me.

Convivio: Not just Dante, but a very particular Hantaï.

La joie de vivre, 1946.

Details of Separation of the apostles, embedded within my monological commentary. “More water-kinema, recalling now not just die erwachsene (and Velázquez’s water-carrier) but also (after I saw him speak last night) Matthew Barney’s countless vessels (the negative space of any mold, of the barrel of a wolf-hunting gun, of an etching electroplate, or the latent negative space of a collision which nobody but him could have seen as a vessel), vessels always orificed, and always bearing witness (by any imaginable act of his recording, his intervening with camera or kiln or substances with never-before-heard name and this is what my pathetic small imagination picks first) to a filling-up, an extrusion, an emptying, a solution-precipitation or -crystallization, a traversal). These two details both from a Separation of the apostles, making the transfer of water as spirit-loaded (here “spirit” is muscle memory of fabbro as well as the Paraclete in persona).”

22 May 2025

I love this Trisha Donnelly drawing in the same way her erratic slideshow taught me to love her objects as remarkably dense intersections of disparate methods, the light-bearing generative core of each being present & alive in the end, because of the rigor with which they are made to converge. It was in a show curated at Galerie Bucholz by Samuel Hindolo.

I didn’t know Laura Owens’s work used to be so really good, in a way that gets momentum from

many of the things that I like in Monika Baer, and even more of the things I like in Lukas Quietzsch, all through a flashe-core palette that's still not off-putting to me. This is 1998 at Gavin Brown's Enterprise.

Galvez: That I must paint lions eating crystal and drinking gold, that the gold may be extruded as dust or mist out along their hair, as oil along quills; that, like Poussin's Bacchus, buvants are a subject par excellence of painting such as I conceive it, neither still life nor figure-composition but rather systems which obviate such genres while making full play of their loaded histories (neither AND both).

The citation is ibn-hamd; "Solomonic architecture" is relevant too; don't think for a second that this is something separate from the flaming-heart-ingestion in Dante.

23 May 2025

[Pasted transcript of voice memo:]

In his first section of the Francis Bacon book, the concept or structure that Deleuze is laying out

is the different devices (which are rudimentary, but subtly employed) that Bacon uses to prevent the figures from taking on the narrative or illustrative valences that they would otherwise basically immediately have just by virtue of being painted figures (and the baggage of tradition I guess). All it takes is the simple touch of adding a cage or glass or ice or a ring or a track or a sofa (in Bacon's case, these are the devices) in order to establish a certain status for the figures that lets them be figures rather than figurations, figural rather than figurative.

I've made a note a handful of times recently that I want to paint what are basically still lives or walls, but I don't want them to have the baggage of the nature morte or the vanitas meditation that they would have by default if they were literally to be considered still lives. Instead, I want to use a simple device (subtly), just as Bacon did. I've even used something like his glass or ice in the painting, which is the favorite one I've made (still): I call it a "crystalline armature" or something: it's the mint green and blue thing locking my pink angels into their own hyperspace. I'll use this again, and I can even picture a way to use it in my current work in progress of my wall with an empty panel on it: I can realize (make real) some of the vertical lines of the composition with a tracing like that mint green and blue one rather than just making them real with a difference in value (à la Deshaun Price) as I had thought to do. I can do this for some of the vertical lines, the light at the top, and maybe some other curves echoing the light's ellipses on a larger scale, maybe a ring on the floor whose center would be where I would stand if I were to be working on the painting, for example, and another one above it showing its extension in space (another ring directly above the first one, that is, showing the extension of that charged zone in space beyond this painting).

Beyond this painting and the ones that I keep clumsily calling "still lives," if I ever get to a place where I can put multiple figures (this, as Deleuze says, all painters would like to do), it will be a fuller realization of what I am already trying to do, in these things that I'm calling still life, in a more elementary mode. Which is, roughly, to realize the project of Nancy's being singular plural, to make possible a mode of relation that resists all of the ways in which relation can slip or fall into stereotypes of one kind or another; or, to set aside Nancy's terms and use Deleuze's, what I'm trying to do is to show a coupling of figures rather than a narrative. Intuitively, when something like this is said, it's understood that the figures are persons. This is true on one level, but it's equally worthwhile to strive for this in paint when the figures are tinctures, melons, flames in the corner…

[Added 9:47a.m.:]

I forgot to note in my voice memo that I was also saying that my formalized-mannerized figures (which are absolutely not spectators, and therefore don't turn the action into a spectacle, but do specify it, namely specifying the situation into something which is like an epistolary or gift or incantatory or canzon situation) have the exact same status as my armatures. My little guys, my Ariel, my Puck; as well as my oncle, mage, alchemist, artist-teacher.

Giotto's Francis receiving the stigmata:

These kite lines have the same status as my armature ones, And therefore can be painted the same way

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Grooms to be another class appended to that of horse-dealers: and they can be imbued with the traits of conservators, e.g. forming a committee or a panel and publishing notes, and errata, and addenda, which are to derive their form and much of their language from the aggregated emissions of the Getty panel painting initiative, but all of this unsubtly having subbed-out a less-than-complete portion of its medium-specific vocabulary for a different one, namely that of horses.
And the grooms also have something to do with racing specifically, and greyhounds, and Bacon's memory of the estate in Ireland, which is also to be superposed onto Ludovic's memory of his site of origin.

Worringer's line is precisely the line of the verticals and ovals I am working on!!

"A powerful nonorganic life: this is how Warringer defined Gothic art, "the northern Gothic line." It is opposed in principle to the organic representation of classical art. Classical art can be figurative, insofar. as it refers to something represented, but it can also be abstract, when it extricates a geometric form from the representation. But the pictorial line in Gothic painting is completely different, as is its geometry and figure. First of all, this line is decorative; it lies at the surface, but it is a material decoration that does not outline a form. It is a geometry no longer in the service of the essential and eternal, but a geometry in the service of "problems" or "accidents," ablation, adjunction, projection, interses-tion It is thus a line that never ceases to change direction, that is broken, split, diverted, turned in on itself, coiled up, or even extended beyond its natural limits, dying away in a "disordered convulsion": there are free marks that extend or arrest the line, acting beneath or beyond representation. It is thus a geometry or a decoration that has become vital and profound, on the condition that it is no longer organic: it elevates mechanical forces to sensible intuition, it works through violent movements. If it encounters the animal, if it becomes animalized, it is not by outlining a form, but on the contrary by imposing, through its clarity and nonorganic precision, a zone where forms become indiscernible. It also attests to a high spirituality, since what leads it to seek the elementary forces beyond the organic is a spiritual will. But this spirituality is a spirituality of the body; the spirit is the body itself, the body without organs — (The first Figure of Bacon would be that of a Gothic decorator). Life provides many ambiguous approaches to the body without organs (alcohol, drugs, schizophrenia, sada-masochism, and so on …" (Logic of Sensation 45-46).

24 May 2025

An ache in the sleepless head familiar from time in Dublin, time in London, and countless time after. 3:51 a.m. this morning and no question of return to sleep; it is that there is an oncoming illness; it is also that it is too warm, only seventy degrees inside, if even, but too warm, too warm at least for all the mongolian beef in my belly. (Genghis Cohen cooked us food last night, with all their red light, well-insulated metal music, and huge-appearing blue aquarium through a discoid cutout; it was to be one of their last dinners at their location on Fairfax.) I knew I would dream.

A vision of an event to come. Autoscopic detail too alive to bear. One lying with left leg flexed all the way back at the hip, another with a hand lain on the lowest extremity of abdomen (if that is what that narrow shore of skin can be called) of the first, a small and distinct pneumatic ridge in a motion which is yet registrable through a compact stack of layers of one histological makeup after another. Indescribably more detail than this: the hand transverse, pinky anterior, and the fingers of it curling down into soft skin to feel the rigid sliding inside. The unwieldiness of hips. Distraction. Distraction as a necessary plot device, a set-piece stiltedly completing what had, pro forma, to be a narrative image tragic in construction, by virtue of its dream status. Nevertheless in the distraction was felt the heartfall of a disappointment as great as this many years' anticipating, and many more's anticipation, could convert to.

Utterly collected, if slow, immediately upon waking. Stationary, the organ-systems in question not bodily active. Recollecting the above one matter-of-fact at a time, each setting into newly conscious relation with the others, a one-by-one which proceeds with uncountably more friction than the slipping all-at-once of immaterial vision.

Unaccountably, happened to chance into my mind a young but distinct practice of painting in, mostly, flashe and oil on mounted board in artist's frame. Inevitably, and I watched this wide-eyed, the disorganized images of paintings-in-non-specific (and yet not -in-general) acquired the charge of the brand-newly-conscious matters of fact in set relation.

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25 May 2025

“Let me be singing when the evening comes”: I found myself with moist eyes when these words were sung at the end of Mass, thoughts in my head of the untenability of all aspects of my life now, the necessity of resuming seeking a spreadsheet-on-screen type job with its breaking of my eyes and my ideals; echo, in it, of Hölderlin in “Patmos”:
“And yet the men grieved, now that evening
Had come, and they were taken by surprise,
Since they were full of great resolution,
And loved living in the sun,
And didn’t want to abandon the Lord's
Countenance, which had become their home”

I still feel I am on the cusp of something. The painting I’m working on now, my painting wall with a blank surface hung center, has too much and not enough: It is missing many of the things I still believe must be in every painting, Bella’s arm is too present in a way that I do not feel fully behind, it is too close to the photograph (the grid makes this glaring), the hand feels like Nguyen’s or Price’s (and even Bella mentioned this, unprompted). But all this is good, not just to have a point to correct from, but also to exorcise the charges that I have here leaned too far into.

But I still feel that the charge which it centers is worth retaining, would even be worth retaining if it came at the cost of everything else, if I could paint nothing but this over and over. I am talking about what it has in common with a Mallarmé negative-still-life such as Une dentelle s’abolit (from memory):

Une dentelle s’abolit
Dans le doute du jeu suprême
A n’entrouvrir comme un blasphème
Qu’absence éternelle de lit

Cet unanime blanc conflit
D’une guirlande avec la même
Enfui contre la vitre blême
Flotte plus qu’il n’ensevelit

Mais chez qui du rêve se dore
Tristement dort une mandore
Au creux néant musicien

Tel que vers quelque fenêtre
Selon nul ventre que le sien
Filial on aurait pu naître

Namely, in the contradiction of the presence of the painting and the absence of the painting (this painting, itself) in the painting. This is, maybe, the best idea I’ve ever had, because it’s the closest I’ve ever come to the language-defying core in common between Hantaï, Mallarmé, Reverdy, Monika Baer, and, perhaps coincidentally, Trisha Donnelly and Calla & Max such as each of these œuvres were presented at ArtCenter.

For two hours I walked around Los Feliz and, after listening to the Freudian Kantarovsky essay (in The Paris Review; republished in an MIT Press monograph, I previously read it cursorily at the GRI), I did not listen to anything else, just walked and thought about what I need to go forward and do, what exactly needs to change, what needs to be my painting, what status it must have, what status it should have.

This immediately after bringing this painting up to here:

The idiom (the hand) is not suitable for me going forward. There are alternatives--Egil’s, Kantarovsky’s, just first to mind; also Gris’s, and maybe also Mithcell Kehe’s and Andrew Kerr’s and Osama al Rayyan’s and Harry Davies’s, etc.--not that I can choose any of these, but that each of them would, if I could, be better than the insufficient one I grasped at here.

But, in forsaking the photographic aide, I need to preserve a sensitivity and a freedom in the placement of lines--a flexibility, a plasticity, contra the defaults I resort to in the pictures below.

Also, these drawings are too empty to become paintings. They need what the “little guys” will bring, as they, perhaps, obviate the denotatory Ashtaryesque arrows; but I think the arrows will stick around anyway, because of the work they do to attain a Reverdyian or Rilkean (i.e., gesture-vocabulary-aspected) status of the wall (or a Heideggerian or Steinian one, if these gestures are understood in the extension of their possibility).

The “little guys” will bring a new plane on which something perfectly self-contradictory or at least neatly self-problematizing can be attained, a new plane, that is, in addition to the made-present blank surfaces (which is, in each case, the surface of the painting itself), and in addition, too, to the tincture status of the liquids which are, in each case, the “content” of the “still life” component--not just interchangeable any-objects, as the ones in cubist still lifes (or Cézanne’s, for that matter) are (falsely, I’d reckon) construed to be. This is necessary and important because the magic or alchemical or ritual or chemical charge borne by a tincture--whether it is a coffee (my morning espresso, or a kaffe abend) or an amaro or a color-changing pastis or a Carthusian beer--acts in direct negation to the “nature morte” premise; this tension--which is, ultimately, to be made palpable in a circular or rotating or oscillating way (as a Mallarmé poem: irreducible to a logical proposition as conventionally understood, somewhat like a Gödel sentence, then); I can draw out the aliveness with my “little guys,” my Pucks and Ariels and Cherubini and Bacchi (ones like Poussin’s, the one drinking up) making alive the fact that this ichor is that which is the fluid in common between caffeine, Spirit, energy, erotic charge, etc.

These are from a few days prior, but they are, on this last count, closer to the right direction. Closer, but not there either: the parts don’t cohere, there is no space (let alone the necessary one which is halfway between the schematic one from the other drawings above and the photographic one from the in-progress painting), and the figural sub-circuits are not sufficiently worked out.

An important question: How many of these planes need to be present in each painting: The blank-surface thing; the still life; an erotic circuit (like the tub one); etc.? Most testimony, including something Jonas Wood said yesterday in a room I was in, attests that “not every painting needs to have everything in it.” How much, then?

I've said this plenty, I think, but, while I don't have any special commitment to still life as a genre with tradition, I have still less interested in landscapes, portraiture, etc. as such. This slight predilection is just because when I say "just a painting," still lives are more near to what I mean than are the others. Mondrian, somehow, paints pictures that have more to do with still life than with anything else, even though they are just paintings, first and last. And when there are "little guys" in my paintings, they are figures (in the sense of Deleuze's figural), but they are not representations of persons; they do not, therefore, change the status of my paintings relative to the still life genre. They are figures to the same extent that Bacon's figures are (even if the latter sometimes bore names): they make forces felt. They are, quite sheerly, the materialization (the rendering-present) of those forces which they register, little more, nothing less. (What little more they are just goes toward some kind of specification of tone, ethos, locus, etc.)

26 May 2025

Opposing peaks knit together – or, the site of as many conjunctions as possible, each balancing opposings: that is to be my painting

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Maybe it is that my "still life" "component" of my paintings feels empty because, in addition to the alchemical-object-paragon tension that the "tinctures" supply, there needs also to be something of the vein of Chardin with the pyramid in the strawberries (my idea I had), something of the vein of Cézanne with his cylinders and cones, the vein of Sérusier (Cézanne's opposite, w/r/t the digital-analogical polarity, from Logic of Sensation) with his ellipse-sections and lines. Will this be too much, or will this be exactly what is needed to replace the feeling of insufficiency? Maybe I won't know until I make another exorcising example, though I want to leave this business of exorcism behind me—it's exhausting me, in the first (too-photographic) wall painting.

Here's an example, from Logic of Sensation, of what I mean when I say "something of the vein of Chardin with the pyramid in the strawberries (my idea I had), something of the vein of Cézanne with his cylinders and cones, the vein of Sérusier with his ellipse-sections and lines":

"... This is what Wölfflin means when he says that, in an optical space where colors are more or less indifferent, it matters little "whether we speak of colors or only light or dark spaces." But things are not so simple. For color itself is capable of two very different kinds of relation: relations of value, based on the contrast of black and white, in which a tone is defined as either dark or light, saturated or rarefied; and relations of tonality, based on the spectrum, on the opposition of yellow and blue, or green and red, in which this or that pure tone is defined as

warm or cool. It is obvious that these two scales of color continually mix with one another, and that their combinations constitute powerful acts of painting. Byzantine mosaic, for example, was not satisfied with making black shores and white surfaces (or the saturated tone of blue enamel and the same transparent tone of marble) resonate together in a modulation of light; it also made its four pure tones (gold, red, blue, and green) play together in a modulation of color: it invented colorism as well as luminist Seventeenth-century painting our sued both the liberation of light and the emancipation of color in relation to the tangible form. And Cézanne often made the two systems coexist, the first through a local tone, shadow and light, shaped by chiaroscuro, the second through a sequence of tones in the order of the spectrum, a pure modulation of color that tends to be self- sufficient. But even when the two kinds of relation work together, we cannot conclude that, being addressed to sight, they thereby serve one and the same. optical space. If it is true that relations of value, modeling in chiaroscuro, or the modulation of light appeal to a purely optical function of distant vision, the modulation of color, on the contrary, recreates a properly haptic function, in which the juxtaposition of pure tones arranged gradually on the flat surface forms a progression and a regression that culminates in a close vision. Thus, it is through very different means that color is conquered in light, or that light attains color ("it is through the oppositions of warm and cool tones that the colors used by the painter - without any absolute luminous quality in themselves come to represent light and shadow")."
Was this not already the great difference between Newton and Goethe from the point of view of a theory of colors? We will be able to speak of optical space only when the eye fulfills a function that is itself optical, depending on the prevailing or even exclusive relations of value. On the contrary, when relations of tonality tend to eliminate relations of value, as in Turner, Monet, or Cézanne we will speak of a haptic space and a haptic function of the eye, in which the planar character of the surface creates volumes only through the different colors that are arranged on it. Are there not two very different kinds of gray, the optical gray of black-white and the haptic gray of green-red? It is no longer a manual space that is opposed to the optical space of sight, nor is it a tactile space that is connected to the optical" (131-132).

I think the labels on my tinctures will provide a pinnacle of detail for the painting that comes as a welcome addition, bestowing a sense of fuller and wider space onto the whole surface. (This is quite a different function than what purpose text served the cubists.)

27 May 2025

"Up there" and "down there" are how Heidegger referred to mountain and city living; the fire is

important and attachable to the correspondent figure in Reverdy; I am more interested in calling my treatment of this subject “cabane” (“cabanon”?) than “hütte”; the challenge is to draw it in a way that is fully after Corbusier without being full of Corbusier (without, that is, adopting Corbusier’s hand).

I love this Sanya Kantarovsky painting, “Yesterday and Today,” for its red, yellow and blue. Shown at Casey Kaplan in Allergies (2014), my favorite show of his, whose distinguishing thread seems to be the persistence of erotic charge to the “predicaments.”

Its green is notable. A few days ago, I thought something similar about this Guston.

And these others, to a slightly lesser extent.

From Juxtapoz, on Eddie Martinez; I hadn’t had a word for this before, but I’d resort to describing it with a phrase like “iterative formal __” or by invoking the particular way in which Grotjahn serializes his work or Jonas Wood works through compositions with drawings.

“We were talking about his famed blockheads, but mostly we spoke about volume and process; this idea of “exhausting compositions.” I loved it; the phrase felt so visual. He said, “But someone like Picasso, not only was he making all kinds of work in different mediums all the time, he was also exhausting the same sort of compositions and imagery because he just felt like they were always variable. That’s something that has hit me. That’s something I just respond to with his work right away because it feels natural to me anyway. And seeing someone who did it their whole life sort of gave me more confidence to do it.””

Last night I dreamt a long dream, on a scale I only touch every several months. I was in a sort of imprisonment, which felt near the top of a cliff, but I could go or had gone out in the direction away from the height-feeling, and it came out that I was in “Franconia,” a German region in a medievalish alternate present, near or between Frankfurt and Cologne, somehow in both and neither; it was in a region with that name, at and not-at the sites of cities with those names, and also in a place like Wolfsburg with stadia like that; when I walked out from the wooden imprisonment, with two or three cells, I could see a clear and cold and fresh horizon, razor-sharp and icy and sunlit and verdant, with bridges appearing even on the horizon to be overwhelmingly tall and elaborate, much bigger and more complicated than the ones over the trinity near downtown Dallas but in the same materials and techniques. The grass was lush underfoot, but only to the eyes. Rendered somewhat in an alike manner to Genshin Impact. I was imprisoned and it was to be, it was inevitable, that I was to be tortured to death, but the precise means were not determined. I could choose my diet; I was given three options, all unsatisfactory, and I chose “orange juice” because it was the least nourishing, and I believed that it would hasten my body’s collapse or even help to numb the effects of the torture. In the neighboring cell I watched someone, not my compatriot, though I had one, as he successfully hung himself from a rafter with a piece of cloth or a garment. But I was not at this point. I was undergoing mutilations and bearing them successfully with a more noble ascetic attitude.

28 May 2025

Don’t forget that, with all the recent talk of rooms and walls and cabanes and hütten, Hölderlin’s tower and Derrida’s attic (high but under) are at the very pulse of it, too

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Pantagruel:
Etrurian (Etruscan?) alphabet: strange-made /mesopotamian antiquity
Chancery hand?

Penthesilea
Drinking (beyond / in addition to Poussin's bacchus) can make a closed circuit, hermetic & begetting contemplation and looping into its diagrammatic territory all that indispensable which emerges from intoxication (enivrez-vous, convivio, etc.)

Heidegger, in "The Thinker as Poet":
An image of a kind of place for painting that I dream of, not in the colloquial sense of "that I dream of" but that I literally hold in my head as an idea worth working on, a situation like Reverdy's room, wall, plafond, lucarne ovale:
"When the early morning light quietly grows above the mountains… When the wind, shifting quickly, grumbles in the rafters of the cabin … When in the winter nights snowstorms tear at the cabin and one morning the landscape is hushed in its blanket of snow …"

Here is the broader context from which I extract this: ""
"Heidegger's attempted submission to the "hidden law" that he claimed for the mountains is expanded by another of his writings, a curious free-falling text — part prose, part poem—written in 1947 whose English title is "The Thinker as Poet." If Heidegger succeeded in demarcating a "work-world" for himself, this text accounts for the detail of its sometime presence. The text is divided into sections, each of which describes a particular thought and is introduced with a sentence that appears to outline circumstances of that thought for Heidegger. These preliminary sentences have been translated as follows:
'When the early morning light quietly grows above the mountains...
When the little wind wheel outside the cabin window sings in the gathering thunderstorm...
When through a rent in the rain-clouded sky a ray of the sun suddenly glides over the gloom of the meadows. …
When in early summer lonely narcissi bloom in the meadow and the rock-rose gleams under the maple...
When the wind, shifting quickly, grumbles in the rafters of the cabin and the weather threatens to become nasty...
When on a summer's day the butterfly settles on the flower and, wings closed, sways with it in the breeze...
When the mountain brook in night's stillness tells of its plunging over the boulders.
When in the winter nights snowstorms tear at the cabin and one morning the landscape is hushed in its blanket of snow ...
When the cowbells keep tinkling from the slopes of the mountain valley where the herds wander slowly…'
When the evening light, slanting in the woods somewhere, bathes the tree trunks in gold …'
The text concludes with a poem:
'Forests spread
Brooks plunge

Rocks persist
Mist diffuses
Meadows wait
Springs well
Winds dwell
Blessing muses" (Adam Sharr, Heidegger's Hut 71-71, emphasis mine).

Notes from Cathay after two complete listenings-through:

The river song, Jewel stairs grievance, river merchants wife, and by the bridge at ten shin and the exile letter have unparallelable crystalline images: e.g. Yellow metal ("They ride upon dragon-like horses,
Upon horses with head-trappings of yellow-metal") (like my Alibaba cup, the "gold" one), the tavern paid with yellow gold and white jewels (ur-site of tincture imbibement: note what happens there)*, "This boat is of shato-wood, and its gunwales are cut magnolia" (think of what this wood could do, Baudelaire-abstraction, to a floor or plafond), the first valley with a thousand heart-piercing flowers and the river which it lies along, that river which contains folds, whose eddies, perhaps, are folds**, Monkeys' sorrowful noises a stand-in for the longing after an absent lover, Yellow dogs howling ("For them the yellow dogs howl portents in vain"), We (guardsmen) fed to the tigers, Which king? Said to have put arrows through the hearts of X thousand tigers. And the Sennin poem, and To Em-Mei, with its eight ply heavens and east window.

[* "Now I remember that you built me a special tavern
By the south side of the bridge at Ten-Shin.
With yellow gold and white jewels, we paid for songs
and laughter
And we were drunk for month on month, forgetting the
kings and princes.
Intelligent men came drifting in from the sea and from
the west border,
And with them, and with you especially
There was nothing at cross purpose,
And they made nothing of sea-crossing or of mountain
crossing,
If only they could be of that fellowship,
And we all spoke out our hearts and minds, and without
regret."
And what else happens in a place like this:
"And there came also the "True man" of Shi-yo to meet me,

Playing on a jewelled mouth-organ.
In the storied houses of San-Ko they gave us more Sennin
music,
Many instruments, like the sound of young phoenix broods.
The foreman of Kan Chu, drunk, danced
because his long sleeves wouldn't keep still
With that music-playing.
And I, wrapped in brocade, went to sleep with my head on
his lap,
And my spirit so high it was all over the heavens,
And before the end of the day we were scattered like stars,
or rain."]

[** "And then, when separation had come to its worst,
We met, and travelled into Sen-Go,
Through all the thirty-six folds of the turning and
twisting waters,
Into a valley of the thousand bright flowers,
That was the first valley;
And into ten thousand valleys full of voices and
pine-winds."]

I must find a way to make it the case that, though there be cups or tinctures in the painting, and sprites too, that the true figures ("protagonists," "agents," "actors") of them—if I'm painting facts, the entities the facts are about—are the ceiling, the window, the floor, the wall. So that it will be true of me what a pound said of Mantegna, "Mantegna painted the wall," but in an entirely different sense.

A certain clarity (Heidegger in the snowed-in room*, =Asle staring at the painting, =Pound's alchemist's plum lake etc. and all the other jewel-step-type and grass-green ripples on the lake or the river's eddies (etc.) from Cathay**) goes hand in hand with Pantagruel. Champagne supernova: it's not even just the premise of excess begetting extreme opposite, it's more, it's deeper, it's in the alcoholic tincture itself; it's a particular kind of clarity, deeper still than Dionysian-Apollonian oscillation — and there has to be room for it, for it all, in the static-gesture-poetics of my wall & armature & sprites & "still lifes" (which concentrate everything geometric & fleshly, everything thrown and projecting, that the organ-spirit-eye, the eye haptic

AND apophatic, is capable of)
[* see above from "___"]
[** see above]

Three things; the old mirror in there catches his eye, and Time slows down. Face, follow the hanging arms, pop the fingers, then turn away.
Ludovic Nemo stretches his member out of its undergarment to empty the piss out of him, stretches it rather much, to clear the waistband of his slacks. (Jos. A. Bank comment) He doesn't unbutton them because he doesn't have to. Their waist is big. He keeps them up with a belt, but he's been wearing them for eight years. He graduated from high school and from college (replace these with their Belgian names or wherever he was schooled: say, at Salem) in them. He received a ring from his monk in them. … (insert something about stretching the member, first pulling without resistance, and after an imperceptible interval of this beginning to encounter increasing resistance until he's stretched out as much clearance as he's going to get and it's time to apply gentle downward pressure to the inelastic waistband and relax his pelvic floor.)

29 May 2025

I'll start with something nice after I drove out of my garage. I saw a sign up high on the building that houses Le Goût and the new gallery and Zakkaabakka and the hookah lounge, a sign that says Ning's House of Beauty, and even though it probably refers to a cosmetology education place, it made me think of the possibility that something between a gallery and a collection could go under the same name. The image of such a place, sited in the upstairs of that building, made me feel good as I drove down my street. But then I got to the bakery where I determined last night I had to buy my lunch for today, and I knew then, last night, when I determined this (which was my only choice because we still haven't gone to the grocery store on the second day after running out of yogurt), when I knew then that I would go there today, I knew that I would also lose my control over one more aspect of my life (being my decision to stop having breakfast).
I stopped having breakfast so that my body-and-brain's energy or activation would stop reaching its peak sometime on the way to or in the early hours at work because this was depressing me. I hoped that removing breakfast would shift that peak rather than just removing it from the picture of my day. For about a week, it seemed that this is what happened. But each day this week (and today is Thursday) I've only been more tired than the last. In this I include even Monday, Memorial Day, on which, despite limited employee attendance (which emptiness usually invigorates me to some extent), I still felt as though I had had no weekend at all. Even this feeling I would have embraced, if it had been the cost of making the weekend into something that made up for the previous week's emptiness of painting-making and idea-sorting (thought-

maintenance). But no, I didn't do any of that this weekend. I became only more behind. And it was for this reason that on Saturday, I said out loud (Bella and Daphne were there), after one or two hours of a panicked silence in which I knew my distress was visible to them, but could do nothing to mitigate it, I said, "There is not one aspect of my life I am not actively losing control of."

I was thinking not just of my painting-making and thought-maintenance, the loss of practical control over which is always too emotionally loaded to be dealt with or discussed with other people already, but rather of the things that made that more important loss of control unbearable. A week ago, I stopped moving my small weights around. This happened at the same time I stopped eating breakfast, and it made me feel out of control, ineffective to control even the token controllabilities that I've always depended on. But in letting it happen, I derived a measure of consolation from the fact that it coincided with an ability to practically think about making paintings to an extent that, while still almost shockingly limited, was undeniably far more significant than it had been at any time in the relevant past.

At the same time, laundry had not been done in a week and would not be done that weekend either. I had to dig one of my two wearable pairs of pants out from under even dirtier clothes to work in this Monday, wearing them for a second week in a row. I'm lucky that I don't cause clothes to smell.

There is an aluminum cup on a saucer, and the cup has a patina of dried coffee on the bottom. I just didn't have time to put it in the sink before I had to leave today, earlier than normal, so that I'd have time to buy my compromising baked goods from Taron.

There are at least two or three highball glasses and an aluminum drink shaker. They are on the counter, and have this in common with the cup and saucer.

There is a large grey pair of slacks and a very large gray sweater that I put on last night because my stomach felt large and painfully sensitive, and I wanted to choose the garments that would apply to it the least pressure possible. These items are still draped on the arm of the couch. I will put them back in the closet without washing them. I just haven't been able to do even this yet.

On the end of the coffee table by the chair that I sit in, there are five or six books, open to something bearing relation to something that I thought at some moment in the last week or so to be worth making a note of. But, in whatever moment that was, I didn't have the time and/or the thinking capacity to make the note in question. The open books marking these things pertaining to things represent only a small fraction of such things. Most of the rest aren't marked by an object in my room. These objects in my room remind me of all the others.

Every day in the morning or the evening, I have to think about what words I will listen to during the upcoming shift. The requirements for these words are so specific that, seeing my distress in failing to manage them, Bella felt compelled to try to help to manage them for me, but very soon gave up in anger because, as she often does, she found my needs to be too particular or too abstract or too many or something else or all of this in a specific combination that made the whole endeavor appear as either meaningless or impossible to her. But when I run out of these words during my shift, I begin--not to panic, but--to despair, in a way deeper than the ambient sense of absence of hope that I maintain and live with. Because the words, when I do succeed in selecting them to meet my specific requirements, redeem the time that I'm spending in some specific and ultimately insufficient but still important way.

For a week or so, I've spent much of my free time waiting to receive an editor's thoughts on the first piece of writing I hope to be paid for. I received them early in the day yesterday, but they've

done nothing but join in with the aluminum cup and saucer and the highball glasses, and the PDFs and images awaiting optical character recognition, and the imagined drawings that I use my gloved thumbs to type concise notational pointers toward into my phone whenever I receive the pointers from out of the nebulous world that I make to be around me during these days and weeks, the nebulous world whose maintenance takes more than what little competency and effectiveness I have, but without which, when it is not always perceptible passing through me, I meet with a different kind of despair that I can't manage.

I needed to go to the bathroom when I got here but I had to wait until now because devil shat outside the bathroom door and I didn't want to clean it up or to have conspicuously ignored it so I had to give as much time as possible for someone else to have to pick it up and now I finally couldn't wait any longer but max was maybe just finishing shitting when I went toward the bathroom and he was talking about how bad it smelled in there so I had to use the other bathroom anyway which I was avoiding at all costs because it's directly across from Joe's desk and he's the one who I think already likes me least so I didn't want to go into the bathroom straight across from him and audibly shit and make a terrible smell and be in here for a long time but now here I am doing all of that

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I've said I want the hand to be different, in my first wall painting; I don't know if I in fact want to change this one, but to make subsequent hands otherwise, but retain the lushness, I think I want to look to Grotjahn and martinez and the spangled mind painters.

30 May 2025

I can't find where, but sometime recently I made a note furthering an ongoing and recently particularly important thread about how what I'm doing has nothing to do with authorship really and everything to do with a poetics which reveals just something of the raw texture of the world that already is, and more than everything needed of art is already there. Revealing, making newly present, rather than creating; etc.

Anyway, revisiting Beckett's Proust, this quotation lies straight in that vein: "I draw the conclusion of this matter from Proust's treasury of nutshell phrases : 'If there were no such thing

as Habit, Life would of necessity appear delicious to all those whom Death would threaten at every moment, that is to say, to all Mankind'" (17).

Also, I want to add this to the recently-developing thread regarding gardens (paradisi), because this gives some kind of key to the whole thing. I include my initial annotation:

'This follows tightly upon the above, but I separate it because of the way it scaffolds my ubiquitous "crystalline" figures (and the alchemy ones, the scent ones, and the tincture ones besides) with pyla that reach deeper into the soul-gouffre than I, it need barely be said, know how to go. "The mood, as usual, has no importance. The point of departure of the Proustian exposition is not the crystalline agglomeration but its kernel--the crystallised. The most trivial experience--he says in effect--is encrusted with elements that logically are not related to it and have consequently been rejected by our intelligence : it is imprisoned in a vase filled with a certain perfume and a certain colour and raised to a certain temperature. These vases are suspended along the height of our years, and, not being accessible to our intelligent memory, are in a sense immune, the purity of their climatic content is guaranteed by forgetfulness, each one is kept at its distance, at its date. So that when the imprisoned microcosm is besieged in the manner described, we are flooded by a new air and a new perfume (new precisely because already experienced), and we breathe the true air of Paradise, of the only Paradise that is not the dream of a madman, the Paradise that has been lost" (55).'

Another way to create the absent center that I so value in my first wall painting could perhaps be to paint still lives in the arrangement that I've sketched several times (with the wall in the background and the armature in the foreground); to (rather than paint these still lives that I kind of formally interpolated each time) just draw them in silverpoint and leave them unpainted, like the blank surface on my wall.

It occurred to me (and the idea came with almost dizzying force) that maybe I need to paint what I've been calling "my oscillatory work" and thinking of as something literary. Maybe I need to paint it rather than write it. I don't know if I'll ever be able to paint figures, but maybe I can, and if I can, one could be called Ludovic Nemo, and I would show him with his back to the armoire. And seven or eight paintings could be called "Ludovic and the horse dealers," and they could be intruding in his little room with its ceiling "high but under." I have a long-standing impulse to eschew narrative, and on first thought this idea seems to contradict that, but maybe it's really the case that these images are as resistant to narrative as any that I've come up with, because, basically, I haven't been able to put them in motion; and maybe that resistance is local to their character. (But then, maybe, eventually, I wouldn't be able to resist writing what I planned to write, and then, if I did, it could be received as fan-fictionalizing (or what Carroll Dunham pejoratively wrote to me in an email, something like "expanded-universe," oh he said "tie-in toys," but in either case, it's the "expanded-universe" impulse), and this is an allure that is, I think, monetizing-oriented at its core, and to be resisted. I need to try to hold it at bay while working out what is essential about this idea, what is really in play, what is really drawing me to

it, what is really putting me off.

Revisiting Bois's "The Blinding," on Henry Matisse, for Leo Steinberg:

Cosmic space? Painting the wall with the window? "As we've just seen, Matisse does not "very often" represent himself in his paintings in the way he does in the 1904 drawing or in The Windshield (Route de Villacoublay. He puts himself "in the painting," of course, but as a general rule does not represent himself. For his painting to be at its most personal he cannot be localized in it. Thus, in spite of appearances, what Matisse is alluding to here is not the solipsistic vision that Mach ridicules, but to peripheral vision in the broad sense, vision that he elsewhere associates, in discussing the extension of his "pictorial space," with cosmic space, in which you have
"no more of a sense of walls than do fish in the sea." "Where does the charm of your paintings of open windows come from?" he is again asked in 1942: "Probably from the fact that for me the space is one unity from the horizon right to the interior of my work room, and that the boat that is going past exists in the same space as the familiar objects around me; and the wall with the window does not create two different worlds." Thus, all the surround-ing space, whether close by or further away, and all the rest of the sensible world as well-odors and sounds, all the things that cannot be seen.
"… Matisse never returned to this mode of address in the period that interests us here, apart from, perhaps-and in a more tender and ambiguous way--Moroccan Café (since the faces have been emptied of their features-we know from Sembat that initially they were all present—we can surmise that the Moroccans are looking at us just as much as they are contemplating the pink flower and the so-called "yellow" fish), or in a very displaced fashion-since it is a still life in the hallucinatory Blue Window from 1912.
But in Music Matisse invents the method of having our eye move around without openly declaring this afocal quality through the arabesque and the scattering of the colored or luminous accents. This method, characteristic of Matisse's expansive scale and his color sat ration, and which Barnett Newman took over as is, exploits a contradiction in the spectator between the desire to stare (at the figures) and the desire to perceive the whole painting. One can't stare at the musicians one by one or, in other words, iso- late them from the visual field-the surrounding respiration of the color beckons to us—but, with the clarion calls of the vermilion bodies on a green-and-blue background competing for its attention, neither can the eye come to rest in a global contemplation-or rather, the global apprehension of the painting, which is essential to Matisse's poetics, can, once again, only be achieved peripherally."

"Matisse rarely employed this kind of oscillation so forcetully, in part because it is only really effective in a large format, but he used it whenever his paintings, through their sheer size, were in a position to exceed our visual field (with one exception, Still Life after Jan David de Heem's

"The Dessert" from 1915, in which he imitates Juan Gris--in my opinion, a complete failure, which is not surprising, since Cubism has nothing to do with subliminal effects). We find the same imposibility of staring (at the figures) and at the same time comfortably perusing the painting in Conversation, which has the same format as Harmony in Red but a much larger scale since it has fewer figures (the effect is redoubled by the saturation of the blue— ….”

“Nothing is more dilated, inflated, or ample than Goldfish and Sculpture from 1912, all stemming from the limpidity of its brushwork. The quivering of the white, under the color, is what brings the painting to a state of erection.”

“Admittedly, he momentarily abandoned the brilliant panchromaticism employed between 1904 and 1917, the tensed-up circulation, expansion, the anagramatized clarion call, preferring instead to draw inspiration once more from Vuillard and even Manet. But he gradually returned to his first loves, starting in the mid-1920s (Elderfield is quite right to remark on the stroboscopic effect of Odalisque with Grey Culottes from late 1926 and early 1927, and the same could be said of the strange kind of collage constituting Harmony in Yellow a year later—a Manet still life in the middle of a fragment from the 1911 The Painter's Family). After the Merion Dance, what I am calling the "Matisse system" was back in place, although of course modified by the experience he had acquired, only now it was brazen, uncompromising. Interior with a Dog (1934, Baltimore Museum of Art) explodes, and right in the middle of the painting there is a red book, a rectangle of pure vermilion, visible only through a deliberate, almost a perverse, effort of will--just like the cadmium yellow book that Marguerite holds in her hand in the great interior from 1911.”

31 May 2025

This morning the phenomenon of my waking was that of driving over a hill in a car, a hill not San Francisco steep, certainly not Mount Washington steep, nor even Echo Park steep, but rather like that hill on maybe Normandie going down to Koreatown, the one about which I always ask “is this Melrose Hill.” Maybe I had that sensation of the tipping of the point-of-view from up to down, traversing a neutral angle, that sensation registered as a lag or a blur in my first trace of world-consciousness, or maybe the analogy drew upon an abstract commonality not at all physical-spatial but rather having to do with the immaterial passage between the immaterial registers of non-consciousness and consciousness; either way, the slow and smooth tipping into wakefulness seems to have its character tied to that of a night spent in unrecorded dream following upon a strange evening of unusually potent beer-drunkenness: alternating North Coast Rasputin Russian Imperial Stout and Delirium Noël (justified with an invocation of “Swinter,”

and noted as really the only beer around with a higher alcohol content by volume than Delirium Tremens, ten percent and change rather than eight percent and change) and only one or two of each but still falling asleep on the couch without realizing it (indeed with no memory of it) in a pile with Bella.

Not so late in the night, in volupté I sunk out of the world. Almost frictionlessly passing by were some instants, and then, with much more inertia and materiality and physical facts to overcome, but still not without calme, we reconvened what had been. A trace of an image, just a spare arrangement of some handful of curves in an extremely specific relation, remains; I wanted to hold it in my memory, I don't have a Matissean facility with this, but I tried, and here is what of that precision remains (four hours have elapsed, Bella has gone, this is as much as I can remember). The dominant note is, precisely, the "evocation" of Matisse which was unmissable in the Kantarovsky which early last week became one of the paintings most strongly living in me (in the press release for Allergies Eli Diner wrote "Evocations of disparate predecessors such as Natalia Goncharova, Henri Matisse, James Ensor, Pierre Klossowski and Philip Guston dissolve into references to Soviet Agit-Plakat posters from the period of de-Stalinization"; even upon inspection, I cannot find Gontcharova, though in my search I found the below costume design of Saint Mark for something called Liturgie, which I love, and these "Pillars of salt" that I value for the way in which they make simultaneous the moai of Easter Island and the large carved stump from New Guinea or Vanuatu (I don't recall) who, I said, "holds his sex"). Do note that I did not look at an image of this painting in at least the twenty-four-hour period preceding the attempt to remember the detail of the curves that is the doubled drawing-pair below. In the three days between, I've filled my mind with Matisse, more precisely with the Matisse of Bois's "The Blinding" (again), but Kantarovsky's mediation remains.

These two paintings identified as Giorgione's specify, in conjunction, a premise of a charged sexual arrangement, related to the uniting theme (premise) of Sanya Kantarovsky's Allergies exhibition, but distinct from it. Distinct, also, from what Balthus would paint in "La montagne," for example. I think to preserve the relations of scale among the figures, and, somehow, the charge, while reshuffling the deck which deals out the roles among the agents, so to speak. Subsequently the latter, which hangs in the Louvre and prompted Manet's Déjeuner sur l'herbe, has been re-identified as Titian's; Titian was Giorgione's Bronzino (preserving some fragment of the genius of his Pontormo, and treasuring this precious fragment unto admirably well-rehearsed mastery of a limited kind, but completely empty of the spirit that made his teacher unsurpassably great). My angle of approach here is conditioned by Beckett's: "So that there is no collapse of the will in Proust, as there is for example in Spenser and Keats and Giorgione. He sits up all night in Paris, with a branch of apple-blossom laid beside his lamp, staring at the foam of the white corollae until the dawn comes to redden them. But this is not the terrible panic-stricken stasis of Keats, crouched in a mossy thicket, annulled, like a bee, in sweetness, 'drowsed with the fume of poppies' and watching 'the last oozings, hours by hours'; nor yet the remote, still, almost breathless passion of a Giorgione youth, the spirit shattered in corruption, damp and rotting, so finely suggested by d'Annunzio in his description of the Concerto ('ma se io penso alle sue mani nascoste, le immagino nell'atto di frangere le foglie del lauro per profumarsene le dita') and so grossly misinterpreted by the same writer when he sees in the rapt doomed figure of the Tempesta a vulgar Leander resting between orgasms; nor yet the horrible pomegranates of 'Il Fuoco,' bursting and bleeding, dripping the red ooze of their seed, putrid on the putrid water."

I said aloud, Thursday morning, the first words from my lips, "piss water," when I saw the espresso begin to come out of my Gaggia. A name containing weakness (immediately palpable in the way it flowed out of the two spout-holes too readily, and in the grayish too-thin foam that was all that gathered on the surface of the dark liquid lacking in warmth), and also the

unwholesome if not noxious nitrogenous mouth-air that I knew would be the primary sensation accompanying its drinking.

The ideal here specified by means of the negative: A thickness like that of honey, and not of honey that runs as fast as honey as warm as this coffee would; a warmth visible in crema of the color that nuts acquire when they are toasted (i.e., the Baudelaire-abstraction of a visible fact that results from the abstract subtraction of an untoasted nut, whether hazelnut or chestnut, from a toasted one).

It occurs to me that here Gaggia is not a bad objective-correlative for me, me a person, me in my capacity of artist. Sometimes I am fine-tuned and out of me flows liquid gold (the persistent presence of piss brings a smile, but here, with the smile, I mean honey, espresso), often I am not, and in those moments the refuse becomes all I am, and I am the object of as much deserved scorn as is Gaggia ("piss water," I said, and there was no love in my voice, to understate). But it's imperative to immediately note that what I am pointing to as adequate objective-correlative is not a machine, just as what Duchamp draws in "Coffee Mill" and "Chocolate Grinder" are not diagrams of machines; they do not, precisely, have the status which is implied by the concept of "machine." Nor am I just invoking the facile spectrum-unity of tool and machine that "gotcha"-compares computers to paintbrushes. Rather what this objective-correlative (Gaggia) and what Duchamp draws have in common is precisely what their diagrammatic status reveals: that they are knots, prisms, even, through which pass rays of light or flows (in-flows of electric current and filtered water, out-flows of liquid gold, through-flows of all impenetrable-unimaginable kinds which only begin with pressure and heat and extend through all of what we cannot name, "inside" the "soul").

Maybe an "uncle" is named Félicien Rodenbach, and is therefore as belge as any of Mallarmé's amis, and it will be said of him that he "read" something (an activity akin to those of the agents of Le souffleur, writing and publishing such that a title bearing their name can be stumbled upon) at Brasserie Lipp, and what he read may be Mallarmé's "Remémoration" or Rops's ex libris for Poésies. The perversion of Rops being suitable for an "oncle," an alchemist of Le souffleur's type; the incorporeality of the instrument-manipulating hands being a sublimely adequate correlative for the abstraction of the motion (dynamic equilibrium, wave-oscillating harmony-stasis) of which the "Remémoration" is a literary-material crystallization. [One more quality appended: The pile of laurel-crowned skulls conjures a specific aspect of an idea of the Parnassians: That, perhaps in Montparnasse, perhaps not far from Lipp, their meetings were

suffused with the same air that made one of them (Coppée?) an anti-Dreyfusard; this same wickedness reaching through Blanchot's writings of the 1930s (?) to the journal for which Mathieu produced an emblem, and coiling neatly under the same allure-sign which I created for that knot around the Nahmads.

À des heures et sans que tel souffle l'émeuve
Toute la vétusté presque couleur encens
Comme furtive d'elle et visible je sens
Que se dévêt pli selon pli la pierre veuve

Flotte ou semble par soi n'apporter une preuve
Sinon d'épandre pour baume antique le temps
Nous immémoriaux quelques-uns si contents
Sur la soudaineté de notre amitié neuve

Ô très chers rencontrés en le jamais banal
Bruges multipliant l'aube au défunt canal
Avec la promenade éparse de maint cygne

Quand solennellement cette cité m'apprit
Lesquels entre ses fils un autre vol désigne
À prompte irradier ainsi qu'aile l'esprit.

Was Lipp the brasserie where London Helly gave an interview? Yes: "He asks what I will drink. Whatever you do, I say. 'But you might not like that!' he exclaims, requesting vodka and orange juice. I order a coupe de champagne, to celebrate his exhibition." … The overriding message of great artists is that they appreciate the hidden–that is, what's real," Nahmad opens. "They counter material reality. These glasses,"–he takes a couple from the table and slams them down again loudly–"these are invented, just an illusion. Brasserie Lipp," a wave of the hand spans busy tables and gliding waiters – "all this is meaningless. The reason I love what I do is that we are close to people and things made by people saying, 'I exist and this is how I feel.'" [He proceeds to cancel the vodka and orders champagne along with the two most expensive things on the

menu: Foie gras (there's some kind of liver damage joke to make here) and sole meunière.] "The sole, perfectly filleted, buttery, succulent, is served, with new potatoes. Nahmad ignores the vegetables and approaches the fish methodically, preoccupied again with his exhibition."

There is much window, wall, ceiling here, but it doesn't feel first-principles-amenable, it's a dazzling, instead, of reflection and glass, even more so than that Bonnard (which, for what it's worth, plots a middle ground on the way from manageable-schematic to dazzling).

Sometimes a fragment of Picasso's genius dislodges itself from the whole and arrives to you, free, such that you may do something with it.
These images, for example, have a character of "first-principles" or Steinian handling of paint and working of figures.
And the figure on the right comes to me as a suitable image building out my mage figure.

I know them to have come from his series of works after Déjeuner sur l'herbe, which was new to me upon my visit (the only one to date) to the Musée Picasso in Paris. I find this image, which comes from a webpage selling a catalogue for an exhibition (Nahmad Collection: Ten Masterpieces) at the Musée Picasso in Antibes (with the tile of the Château Grimaldi, which I feel I know so well even though I've passed over it only once, still reminding me of the smell of fish linked to the simultaneously-experienced tile just inside the front door of the building where we rented a room (one can see while one smells; the fish was from the market outside the front door of the building in which we rented a room, the room whose shower we couldn't keep from briefly flooding (there's another tile remembered), the room whose back window looked directly to the Château Grimaldi across a small space of pavé on a plane well above that of the market on the building's other side), and its idiosyncratic interior-doorway thresholds, more visible in the other images below), while searching for images from the large exhibition at Kunsthaus Zührich which was the subject of the interview for which "London Helly" came to Brasserie Lipp.

That I am interested most of all in the way in which symbols are constituted and manipulated, or, revealed and put in play and made to play out. That this is what I am up to when my agents are plafond, mur, fenêtre, escalier, bougie, lampe, lucarne, i.e. when I over and over again paint the wall (my own “Mantegna painted the wall”): It is that I am fascinated to watch, as though for the first time and in real time, the coming into being of set-pieces or entities, the sense of significance-loading. It could also be said: “I am interested in watching meaning come into being”; but this would probably be too easy, and bring problems; still, if that were said, and it were asked what makes it happen, the answer, same as ever, would be: what happens at the edges of repetition, difference; what applies pressure at the edges of the free play of transposition, what opens this conjugation up, what river-bottom-rocks determine the shape of its clear flow, what eddies register its eventual coming to stasis.

That is what I was thinking as I made these three drawings upon being able to say that, perhaps, my first wall painting (the one I am treating only, really, as an exorcism of sorts) is done. Three drawings which reprise it repeatedly, changing just something little that I see as holding it back each time.

1 June 2025

In order not to become decoration, the sprites must be assuming ever more complicated (or at least ever more substantively interesting, if not more intricate) relations-forms. The binary

rotation of simultaneous but not mutual attraction is great, but there needs to be no letting up in the furtherance of what distinguished that arrangement. For example: A Lacanian tetrafoil of sorts, maybe even arranged in a Dürer-witches rhomboid/parallelogram (this is the composition Pontormo adopted; I'll adapt it in a different direction). I have a hunch that the seminars, and Alenka Zupančič and Jamieson Webster etc., can supply me with precisely the kind of complication I need.

2 June 2025

These were the sections I noted in rereading Bois's Matisse / Blinding / Leo Steinberg:

As we've just seen, Matisse does not "very often" represent himself in his paintings in the way he does in the 1904 drawing or in The Windshield (Route de Villacoublay. He puts himself "in the painting," of course, but as a general rule does not represent himself. For his painting to be at its most personal he cannot be localized in it. Thus, in spite of appearances, what Matisse is alluding to here is not the solipsistic vision that Mach ridicules, but to peripheral vision in the broad sense, vision that he elsewhere associates, in discussing the extension of his "pictorial space," with cosmic space, in which you have "no more of a sense of walls than do fish in the sea." "Where does the charm of your paintings of open windows come from?" he is again asked in 1942: "Probably from the fact that for me the space is one unity from the horizon right to the interior of my work room, and that the boat that is going past exists in the same space as the familiar objects around me; and the wall with the window does not create two different worlds." Thus, all the surround-ing space, whether close by or further away, and all the rest of the sensible world as well-odors and sounds, all the things that cannot be seen.

"… Matisse never returned to this mode of address in the period that interests us here, apart from, perhaps-and in a more tender and ambiguous way--Moroccan Café (since the faces have been emptied of their features--we know from Sembat that initially they were all present—we can surmise that the Moroccans are looking at us just as much as they are contemplating the pink flower and the so-called "yellow" fish), or in a very displaced fashion-since it is a still life in the hallucinatory Blue Window from 1912. But in Music Matisse invents the method of having our eye move around without openly declaring this afocal quality through the arabesque and the scattering of the colored or luminous accents. This method, characteristic of Matisse's expansive scale and his color saturation, and which Barnett Newman took over as is, exploits a contradiction in the spectator between the desire to stare (at the figures) and the desire to perceive the whole painting. One can't stare at the musicians one by one or, in other words, isolate them from the visual field-the surrounding respiration of the color beckons to us—but, with the clarion calls of the vermilion bodies on a green-and-blue background competing for its attention, neither can the eye come to rest in a global contemplation-or rather, the global apprehension of the painting, which is essential to Matisse's poetics, can, once again, only be achieved peripherally."

Matisse rarely employed this kind of oscillation so forcefully, in part because it is only really effective in a large format, but he used it whenever his paintings, through their sheer size, were in a position to exceed our visual field (with one exception, Still Life after Jan David de Heen's "The Dessert" from 1915, in which he imitates Juan Gris--in my opinion, a complete failure, which is not surprising, since Cubism has nothing to do with subliminal effects). We find the same impossibility of staring (at the figures) and at the same time comfortably perusing the painting in Conversation, which has the same format as Harmony in Red but a much larger scale since it has fewer figures (the effect is redoubled by the saturation of the blue— …."

Nothing is more dilated, inflated, or ample than Goldfish and Sculpture from 1912, all stemming from the limpidity of its brushwork. The quivering of the white, under the color, is what brings the painting to a state of erection.

Admittedly, he momentarily abandoned the brilliant panchromaticism employed between 1904 and 1917, the tensed-up circulation, expansion, the anagramatized clarion call, preferring instead to draw inspiration once more from Vuillard and even Manet. But he gradually returned to his first loves, starting in the mid-1920s (Elderfield is quite right to remark on the stroboscopic effect of Odalisque with Grey Culottes from late 1926 and early 1927, and the same could be said of the strange kind of collage constituting Harmony in Yellow a year later—a Manet still life in the middle of a fragment from the 1911 The Painter's Family). After the Merion Dance, what I am calling the "Matisse system" was back in place, although of course modified by the experience he had acquired, only now it was brazen, uncompromising. Interior with a Dog (1934, Baltimore Museum of Art) explodes, and right in the middle of the painting there is a red book, a rectangle of pure vermilion, visible only through a deliberate, almost a perverse, effort of will--just like the cadmium yellow book that Marguerite holds in her hand in the great interior from 1911.

3 June 2025

A very talented painter teaching at the Städelschule, Vera Palme:

From an Albert Oehlen monograph, by Bonnie Clearwater for MOCA:
Hans Hofmann, though I've always found his work uninteresting, and quite unnecessarily limited, here becomes a seed of the way I see a re-Symbolist painting: All one has to do is generalize his pushes and pulls from the plane of color to all the other coplanar planes. (It must be said, to his credit, that color is the realest such plane; that is, if one has been able to set in perfect balance the tug of war of color, then all the others should have followed before long as a matter of course.)
"Hans Hofmann instructed his students to maintain control over the illusionistic qualities of color. The eye perceives certain colors as receding, while others seem to project forward. Hofmann demonstrated how to counteract these forces so that the various planes of color remained locked in a two-dimensional balance. In his own paintings the tug of war between adjacent colored planes creates dynamic movement and voluminous space while maintaining the literal flat surface of the canvas. This pictorial ten-sion, which Hofmann termed "push and pull," became a hallmark of American abstract painting. As American art critic Clement Greenberg observed in 1961, Hofmann approached the canvas "consciously as a responsive rather than inert object, and painting itself as an affair of prodding and pushing, scoring and marking, rather than of simply inscribing or covering..... And it is thanks in part to Hofmann that the 'new' American painting in general is distinguished by a new liveliness of surface." / Oehlen also employs "push and pull" in his paintings, but he pushes and pulls the space of his paintings in several directions at once, instead of maintaining the unified two-dimensional surface of the canvas …"

Today, listening to a text-to-speech of a subset of my notes yet again, I noticed a parallel with something from the recent past: Deleuze and Haas-Stein here pinpoint something quite in common.

Deleuze: "It is in this way that music must render nonsonorous forces sonorous, and painting must render invisible forces visible. Sometimes these are the same thing: Time, which is nonsonorous and invisible, how can time be painted, how can time be heard? And elementary forces like pressure, inertia, weight, attraction, gravitation, germination--how can they be rendered?" (Logic of Sensation 56).

Stein-Haas(-James): "Every item is tentative, adventurous, experimental, unfinished;

nothing is: each thing becomes; change and growth are in each. So in fleeing the genteel tradition, James found America." / This is the world of flux and presentness which Stein brings to the attention in "Composition as Explanation." "Composition" to interpret the terminology, is "what is seen." It is the composition, Stein says, "and the time of and the time in the composition" which changes. In this seen world no one thing changes-for all things are change. … The words, "a composition of a prolonged present is a natural composition in the world as it has been these last thirty years," leave little doubt, furthermore, as to what Stein has considered to be the characterizing point of view of her gen-cration It is the attitude of Pragmatism, with its conception of the world as an ongoing present event, and with its consequent categories of changing process, texture, strands, environment, spread, quality, fusion, blocking and novelty."

I add that these (incomplete) lists (like Rilkean gesture-vocabularies) furnish an answer, perhaps the beginning of the best one, to the question implicit when I recently noted "That I am interested most of all in the way in which symbols are constituted and manipulated, or, revealed and put in play and made to play out. That this is what I am up to when my agents are plafond, mur, fenêtre, escalier, bougie, lampe, lucarne, i.e. when I over and over again paint the wall (my own "Mantegna painted the wall") … What happens at the edges of repetition, difference; what applies pressure at the edges of the free play of transposition, what opens this conjugation up, what river-bottom-rocks determine the shape of its clear flow, what eddies register its eventual coming to stasis."

4 June 2025

An image of a body whose lower abdomen is flattened, not quite deflated because certainly not flaccid but rather flattened in the sense of being drained of depth without losing its status in three-dimensional space. --Or, better than "lower abdomen," I mean precisely that jointure of lower-middle abdomen and upper-pelvic-floor which is perceptible as continuous, because tensed, when one reaches a certain kind of hunger, not acute, but simmering, and in a state of a certain simmering activity.

(Almost immediately after the fact, thought to make this body-image (of an order, incidentally, which is that of the content of a Nicola Tyson painting) into an objective-correlative for the state of conjunction into which Hemingway, in A Moveable Feast, puts ingestion and libido. And the very next thought to my mind was, is there an objective-correlative on the same order of the first (paintable) body-image, but to be paired, instead, with what was for me the resonance-phenomenon of the term "eau-de-vie" (or, to add to that term, also "aquavit" and all the "aqua vitae" history which binds them)?

This image come to me whole, somewhat in the same manner as did, apparently, to Duchamp the phrase "La mariée mise a nu par ses célibataires, même," or rather the "-- même" of that phrase (see below).

Many images, in words or otherwise, come to me in this same way; just for a first example, this is exactly the phenomenon of the arrival of “Chaque jour, le matin, je me réveille. Je ne pense qu’à mon dernier loup.”
“Note the "Even." This sly adverb, thrown in to discourage literal readings, has also been subjected to endless analysis. One explanation is that it should be read as a pun on "m'aime," meaning "loves me" —that is to say, the bride being stripped by these anonymous bachelors really loves Marcel Duchamp. The tribe can't resist looking for clues to the man in such discoveries, but Duchamp always maintained that his odd little adverb had no meaning whatsoever, that it was just "fun and poetry in my own way," that "the word même came to me without even looking for it." It was simply a humorous aside, something like the "already" in "enough, already."” (Tomkins’s Duchamp biography, page 3).

Other notes from Tomkins Duchamp:

Are the spangles just a cute little allegory for what becomes of semen in what is scientifically-(vulgar-)known of the mystery of incarnation, of emergence of new being from out of relation of beings?

“When the lighting gas enters the Capillary Tubes, it solidifies there through the phenomenon of stretching in the unit of length. (A Duchampian phenomenon.) As it emerges from the other end of the tubes, though, the now-solid gas breaks up into small needles of unequal length, which Duchamp calls spangles of frosty gas. These spangles tend to rise, since they are lighter than air; they are trapped by the first Sieve, although "trapped" may be the wrong term, for another note tells us that each spangle strives (in a kind of spangle derby) to pass the holes of the sieve with élan. The spangles are a lively lot. Each one retains in its smallest part the malic tint. But as they pass through the Sieves they become dazed, they lose their designation of left, right, up, down etc. They no longer retain their individuality. In their progress through the sieves they change from spangles lighter than air... into: a liquid elemental scattering, seeking no direction. And Duchamp's note on them concludes, What a drip!” (8).

I did not know, when two and a half weeks ago I became adoringly aware of a liqueur called “Bénédictine,” that Duchamp had hung the very same from a Hook! “While this spangle derby is going on, other elements of the bachelor machine are slipping and grinding and groaning into action. The Glider slides back and forth with a jerky motion. It is activated by the waterspout falling on the Water Mill, whose turning raises a Bottle of Benedictine suspended from a Hook; after reaching a certain height, this bottle falls, and its fall exerts the pressure that pulls the Glider.” (8-9).

When I read this I reach a pinnacle of desire to earn my living as an actuary, awaiting, as I am,

the verdict on whether I can continue at CAS at all (I've since received a text message notifying me that I can, for another limited period, this time of 10-12 weeks; I will only accept it if I can work only four days); even though nobody knows Princet, he did his work, even in just discoursing with these heroes, and had a greater impact on painting than almost every painter ever will.

"The Puteaux artists made an effort to understand the mathematical concepts underlying the fourth dimension. Much of their information on the subject came from Maurice Princet, a young insurance actuary and amateur mathematician who had been hanging around Picasso's studio for several years. (He occasionally finagled a Picasso drawing to sell, and he was in love with one of Picasso's casual girlfriend-models; eventually he married her, but she left him a few months later for the painter André Derain.) Picasso paid no attention to this rather innocuous eccentric. Jean Metzinger thought that Princet "conceived mathematics as an artist," though, and it was Metzinger who started bringing him to the Sunday afternoons at Puteaux, where he found a receptive audience."

I knew from Yvonne and Magdeleine torn in tatters that Duchamp had a true talent for painting, painting proper, that not even Nude descending a staircase revealed.

Still, it has been something of a shock to find paintings as formidable as these, a small group for which I would lay down everything I own and follow.

The Bush, for the geometry of the kneeling body, for her pink and green highlights, for the orange highlights of the pink standing body, for how they "seem to be enacting some sort of esoteric ritual. One of them is kneeling; the other stands, resting her right hand on the head of the kneeler, as though presenting her to an unseen authority" (Tomkins).

"Sonata," despite the weakness of its color (which may be a function of the reproduction), for the cruciform composition, and for the truly radical openness to form and line with the bottom fallen out (the very respect in which mainline cubism disappoints where it claims to succeed highest--"mainline cubism" being Picasso and Braque and, even if it pains me now to say it, Gris, in thrall, as I am, to his crystallinity), and for the facet-texture of its world, akin to that of Wyndham Lewis's world (which is, really, the only reason for which I value the latter man, as a painter or otherwise).

Young man and girl in spring (ignore this reproduction except as a pointer) for the relation it strikes to the Genesis récit itself, and for the orb at center (I could paint such an orb; it could replace my “armature,” even, but it would still remain to reconcile it to the rectilinear format, and I’m not confident I could do that with it as I can with my “armature”).

Young sister for its white and the emaciation which is an effect akin to that I try to describe above, and also akin, in a strange and indirect way, to the kinds of bodily transformations practiced by Pontormo and Parmigianino (most stereotypically elongations, but there is a whole world of others).

Each of the 1902-1910 paintings, for their green.

This talismanic extremely-early drawing, for the way it is even more compellingly diagrammatic than is his coffee grinder (onto which I’ve already latched).

[Addition 9 June 2025: That gas lamp, or one just like it, had all of my attention in the last scene of The Phoenician Scheme, seen last night at Los Feliz 3 with my parents, Bella, and Daphne.]

[Continuation 19 June 2025:]

This mention came to me as luminous, but I cannot partake of its fruit until I am able to make it into Nancy's Ego Sum, making palpable as never before the play and nature of Descartes's "extension," and the play and nature of the masks / masking / performance which is constitutive of his philosophical discourse.

"For Duchamp, however, chess was much more than a retreat or a refuge; it was a near-perfect expression of the Cartesian side of his nature, which, like every Frenchman of his class and education, he had acquired as a matter of course. Although he once said that he had "never read Descartes, to speak of," Duchamp admitted to being "very much of a Cartesian." Cartesian doubt lay behind his habit of questioning every previous definition of art, so that, as he put it, "doubting everything, I had to find something that gave me no doubt because it didn't exist before. All along, I had that search for what I had not thought of before." In his pursuit of absolute originality and absolute freedom, he had rejected Cartesian logic, turning instead to Raymond Roussel, Alfred Jarry, and other antirational-ists. But rejection was not the same as renunciation. Duchamp's working methods were marked by an almost mathematical precision, and one of the things he loved about chess was that its most brilliant innovations took place within a framework of strict and unbendable rules. "Chess is a marvelous piece of Cartesianism," he once told me, "and so imaginative that it doesn't even look Cartesian at first. The beautiful combinations that chess players invent—you don't see them coming, but afterward there is no mystery—it's a pure logical conclusion. The attitude in art is completely different, of course; probably it pleased me to oppose one attitude to the other, as a form of completeness"" (211).

Here is where the Closerie des Lilas differentiates itself from the (flashier? More Eiffel-tower-like) Flore and Deux Magots, meriting, beyond them, status akin to that which Brasserie Lipp has acquired for me. "A group of Cubist-influenced artists, most of whom had been painting until recently in the Fauve style, began to meet regularly in 1910 at one another's studios and at the Closerie des Lilas, the famous old Montparnasse cafe, where the Tuesday evening gatherings sponsored by Paul Fort's literary journal, Vers et Prose, brought together the older generation of Symbolist poets and writers and the rising generation of artists. The Cubist group-Robert Delaunay, Jean Metzinger, Albert Gleizes, Henri Le Fauconnier, Fernand Léger, and one or two others —felt the need to discuss and analyze the radical innovations of Picasso and Braque: the flattening out of pictorial space within the painting, so that a picture was no longer a window to

look through but an object in itself; the fusion of image with background; the juxtaposition of representational and abstract elements; and, most strikingly, the shifting point of view that depicted objects within the painting from different angles simultaneously" (49).

And: "Many of these artists, including the Duchamp brothers, attended the Monday evening meetings at Gleizes's studio in the suburb of Courbevoie, and they also went to the Tuesday night soirées at the Closerie des Duchamp took a very minor part in the discussions and arguments at these meetings. A listener rather than a talker, he was still somewhat in the shadow of his older brothers, especially Raymond, whom he admired to the point of hero worship. Among the Cubists' favorite subjects of debate, though, at least two held special interest for Duchamp. One was the search for an art that would engage the mind as well as the eye; the other was the fourth dimension" (57).

I marked this quotation because it showed me a sense of humour in some very specific way similar to that of Mark Grotjahn. (Incidentally, I read last night [18 June 2025], Bolaño quotes this same section of Tomkins in 2666.) "As Duchamp later told Cabanne, "It amused me to bring the idea of happy and unhappy into readymades, and then the rain, the wind, the pages flying, it was an amusing idea."'

This is one of countless accounts of that which it feels insufficient to call "Duchamp's charm," something that developed through the course of the biography unto comic proportions: "... described it nearly thirty years later: 'Someone came in by the window, with a bottle of cognac in his pocket; it was Marcel Duchamp whom I had been hearing about for more than a year, and whose every act, every word that was repeated to me, had opened up in me unlimited perspectives on the future... Immediately, I liked that face, that admirable profile of a purity without equal, that sovereign elegance in clothing, gestures, and speaking, that kind of haughty dandyism that tempered the most exquisite politeness. And that silent laugh that cut the ground from under pedants.'"

"This, of course, is a central theme in The Large Glass. The Glass itself is a window, a transparent membrane through which the viewer can take part in an infinitely delayed act of coition that involves no penalty (no regret) because it is never consummated."

Is precisely this same state of affairs in effect today?

"The postwar migration of American writers, painters, musicians, and pleasure seekers to Paris was gaining momentum in 1922. For many of them, the incentive was not just the favorable rate of exchange, which allowed Americans to live so agreeably in France, but a strong desire to escape from what seemed to be an increasingly repressive and puritanical social climate at home. It would be a year or so before the Jazz Age arrived to shake up the social order, and in the meanwhile, as the expatriate painter Gerald Murphy said, "You had the feeling that the bluenoses were in the saddle and that a government that could pass the Eighteenth Amendment could, and probably would, do a lot of things to make life in the States as stuffy and bigoted as possible."'

A lesson straight from Proust; valuable that the thread comes not only through Beckett but also through Duchamp:

“On several occasions Duchamp was asked to clarify his concept of the "esthetic echo," which had intrigued the others when he proposed it at the first session. Works of art could not be understood by the intellect, he maintained, nor could their effect be conveyed in words. The only valid approach to them was through an emotion that had "some analogy with a religious faith or a sexual attraction--an esthetic echo." This echo, however, was heard and appreciated by very few people. It could not be learned--either you had it or you did not--and it had nothing whatsoever to do with taste, which was merely a parroting of established opinion. "Taste gives a sensuous feeling, not an esthetic emotion," Duchamp said, "Taste presupposes a domineering onlooker who dictates what he likes and dislikes, and translates it into beautiful and ugly," whereas "the 'victim' of an esthetic echo is in a position comparable to that of a man in love or a believer… when touched by esthetic revelation, the same man in an almost ecstatic mood, becomes receptive and humble” (368-369).

6 June 2025

I think I want to appropriate for Ludovic the episode of Duchamp and Gabrielle and the Jura, but make it uncertain to which of them is attached the apparatus of impossibility of the love (the apparatus that is the immovable object against which the desire has to press in order to derive its force, like locomotion by reverse osmosis).

To which of them the apparatus is attached: By that I mean, which of them is a fast fish harpooned and bound fast to the hull, an opium-smoking and fast-car-driving spouse and children.

That indeterminacy (to which of them those attributes are attached) can be introduced, maybe, somewhere in the middle of the narration of the episode with the train station and the letters.

And the fast-car-driving opium-smoking spouse should also be extended with the attributes of Jarry in addition to Picabia: He is to have the habit of calling his bicycle whatever Jarry called it, and the precocious imagination of a marionette play back in school (as described by Tomkins, of course).

Whereas to Ludovic is to be attributed all the many things Tomkins takes it upon himself to say about Ducamp's own handsome appearance, impeccably suave and simple manner, especially as a newcomer to Paris and even more especially as a newcomer to New York.

9 June 2025

Prince Alexis Obolensky

These enfants are the pinnacle of their bacchic species; whereas, I am to make to emerge a new species altogether

11 June 2025

Last night was -- bad. I am awake at 4:43 a.m., having only slept a false sleep that leaves me now with the nausea of having stayed up this late, even though I went to bed some time around 11, I hardly remember. I was drinking martinis with unwonted abandon, martinis and then just ice-shaken gin at a point at which I no longer cared, all in a one-thing-following-another beginning from the simple starting point of Bella having made us each a martini as a nice surprise when I got home, which she could not have known would have this effect, but which definitively derailed the one evening in recent memory in which I arrive home with a set plan and the enthusiasm and more than enough energy to frictionlessly push through it (this was the Tuesday after the Monday off on my first four-day week at C.A.S., my ninth week there total); the plan was gym and drawings and notes, but especially drawings.

Instead it didn't happen, and I created a derangement of the room which adequately objective-correlates the derangement I created in my head, adequately because of the unusualness, unto unprecedentedness, of each of these things: as I watched the third quarter (I'd watched the first half the night before) of Cassavetes's Husbands, I sank slowly between the two sections of the couch, separating them; after I finished watching, I unhooked the left side of the projector's screen, letting it fall to the right, which looks as akilter as the Orthodox sign of the cross. I took pictures, because each of these things is a painting; I took multiple pictures, just two or three, of each, which is all I need, just crucially more than one. (Note, though, that each of these is a painting only if my paintings are taken to have the possibility of attaining their certain alignment, or crystalline harmony, on a really truly abstract plane beyond the derangement (dérangement) or centrifugality which will come off as pervading all immediately- and near-term

perceptible aspects of these paintings, if they are made. I can therefore only make these paintings with a certain caution which must accompany a certain risk that they run: that of hindering understanding of what it is that I seek in every painting.)

I did draw, anyway, last night, but just to make these things that are Picassoid just precisely in that he had that last period with such extreme dérangement of composition and hand, and also just in a certain prurience which is (in addled and embryonic form) that of his Fornarina suite. (I paste these as an exercise in humility, a little shame ritual:)

This after trying for ages to print several copies of the rectangles (of specific aspect ratio) that I spend so long producing before almost every drawing I make, and failing in sad little fits of inert rage. After enormous effort I made this, but could not, no matter how hard I tried, get my printer to print it.

It is now 5:10; I only got out of bed in the first place to make the following note, that was in my head when I moved seamlessly into consciousness from my false sleep, an image, that is, that you could call a dream I awoke with, were it not for the essential dreamlessness of the sleep that leaves one so tired until at least 5 p.m. on days that follow such drinking. Just this: A painting that fuses at least three or four desert-hill-cave settings from paintings of Duccio and so forth (the Lazarus of the Kimbell, and the painter [Giovanni di Paolo] whose strangeness stayed with me upon my most recent visit to the Met, last August), all with an eye to painterly problems which is that of Dustin Hodges's Barley Patch (the things that I was paying attention to during our visit to it, not the off-putting signaturism of his cartoon figures which prevent Bella from seeing past it to anything else), and also a little bird cage, not the one from that early Jonas Wood still life, but rather the small one from Canterbury Ct which was for long in the front bedroom of Nana's last house, which is selling, finally, right now, the offer solidified while my parents were out here with me this past weekend--the bird cage small, and gold, with blue and green life-presence inside, the bird cage round enough to be, seamlessly, a new instantiation of what I have been calling my "armature," striking in its participation thereof, though I never thought of this "armature" in its light before. The bird cage will, in the painting, be small, not tensing one or more of the borders of the picture-rectangle as it has mainly done for me in the past, but rather just heightening the spatial depth of the whole setting, by means of the acute locus thereof that it will be, by means, that is, of a kind of synecdoche, or, better, the specific and deliberate affordance of a discrete local maximum that sensitizes the viewer to the nuanced motions all

along the derivative(s) of the rest of the manifold.

Barley Patch:

Huw Lemmey:

Hitsudo Nobuya:

I paste these last images by way of making more real and attainable the kind of setting-synthesis that I am talking about, which is, really, a rather simple operation of drawing and paint.

It is 5:25 a.m., the sky is slowly turning the wall that fills our windows blue, and I return to bed to try to dull the pain that will be the morning and its return to work on the second day of what should have been my easiest week there so far.

18 June 2025

Seen / drawn / painted (my first use of the Flashe which arrived more than two weeks ago):

Undisciplined I am, painful this was as ever.
Then I drew, I would myself train, discipline - disciple - behold (these words, in a different order, came to me in St. Joseph's Church, Stuart, Fla.), I thought a fountain pen would permit the athletic-pleasure activity of a hand like Tiepolo's (I read he used a reed pen, not a quill like his son, on sized paper) and at a speed faster than that of the hand of Rivette's Frenhofer which agonized me with its lagging scratching; but I was wrong, I need to be able to do this in Sharpie ultrafine:

Lastly I read Pound's Canto IV aloud, and everything in me concentrated toward painting the contact between bark and water, the water the silver into which light rains and ivory dips, the bark Venetian as a buccentoro and also the vessel that bore Li Po up the river; but then I realized this was absurd, that I want discipline, that I ought not set about trying to paint every image which comes to me with any strength.

Last week and the week before, I read Calvin Tomkins' biography of Duchamp. I grew new loves for the Large Glass (which replaced a preexistent but lesser love, colored by the wrong kind of incomprehension) and for the work of Duchamp's oldest brother, Jacques Villon. The particular strand of Puteaux cubism practiced by this latter is often labelled "lyrical," and I do not love it whole, but what I found in certain black and white reproductions--not necessarily completely represented herebelow--is a significantly stronger articulation of the raftlike sort of painting-as-site that I thought I'd found in Nathan Oliveira's sled monotypes.

"Le Bourget" (1954).

“Huile sur toile réalisée en 1954 par Jacques Villon ayant de fortes similitudes avec Le Bourget.”

“Villacoublay” (1954).

Etude pour “Villacoublay.”

Etude pour “Orly.”

I need these horses for my horse-dealers:

I need these pipes for my Brasserie Lipp and my Closerie des Lilas:
Jacques Villon, “Têtes de pipes” (1945).

“Pipes en terre” (1945).

“Big boy” and “Portrait de Camille Renault assis devant son portrait peint par Jacques Villon, Puteaux, après 1944”:

This man has been portrayed in the following array of images that add up, kaleidoscopically, to a representation of a patron nearly as compelling as that of Gertrude Stein by Picasso:

A drawing, also more by Villon in the Pompidou and Art Institute Chicago, respectively:

Elisabeth Ronget:

Gino Gregori:

Maïce le Baron:

Unclear:

The lion-man and stag attributes refer to statuary he collected and kept outdoors:

I know that because of this page from a book by Hugues de Saintmont, pseudonym of Emmanuel Peillet, friend of Queneau:

Henri-Bernard Goetz:

Perhaps best of all, echo of Schutz's lion, Reynold Arnould:

And "Big Boy," the painting for which that last was a study.

I would lift the vessel, rich with my kind of ellipses, from this La poupée au vase rouge; and, I would take the premise of a puppet or sprite in a cup.

Ciel et terre (1930) rhymes out a much earlier Mondrian still life that I hold near my core (pasted after):

This one the same, “Nature morte aux globes”:

This Guignol lyonnais makes Ensor new again, for me, and helps to supply the guignol quotient my oscillatory work was missing, at least if that work is to be transposed in paint, not words.

These two, in particular, record a manner of applying paint that I saw clearly in my mind on the Sunday when I first met Beckham Robillard-Cole, specifically while I was driving back home from his house, having attended mass at that Jesuit church on Sunset. An image of paintstrokes, thick but misty-edged daubs, primarily associated with a certain one of the manners of Molly Rose Lieberman. I bought six small tubes of Flashe shortly before this time. Peinture (c. 1934)

and Femme assise (1933).

This one, in particular, makes me think not just of the Dana Schutz drawing by the same name, but also that herein may be a hand suitable to the recording of such vocabularized gestures and postures as find themselves the subject of large swaths of Baxandall's Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy, including, at one point, a passing comment that a philosopher will not be painted appearing to be engaged in fencing. Le philosophe (c. 1930).

And "Vase et coquillage," that which, finally, might be closest to what I am currently about to be doing (which is distinct from "closest to what I am trying to do," that which I almost wrote).

Arnold Hauser on Pontormo's Vertumnus and Pomona, returning me to Marcantonio Flaminio: It "is characterised by even greater narrative ease than the pictures of Joseph. It is the most relaxed, the gayest, and the least enigmatic picture that Pontormo painted. None of the fantastic, bizarre, and piquant details of the earlier pictures reappear in it. Only the stylistic elegance remains, but a change has come over it; it is bolder, more sure of itself, less strained. It is an aristocratic style in pastoral form--spiritual without being nervous, poetical without sentimentality, delicate without decadence. It is unquestionably the most unbroken and homogeneous of Pontormo's works; nevertheless it is not completely 'naïve' or free of all play with form. It is penetrated by a restrained rococo feeling, its apparent naïveté conceals the most extreme refinement, but the right present in all pastoral poetry is something it cannot disguise. Structurally, too, it is far from simple, and not without its inner contradictions; it combines a delicate feeling for nature with

uncommonly complex and carefully developed Michelangelesque forms deriving from the Sistine ceiling, an apparently spontaneous pleasure in things with an almost geometrical sense of order, and with principles such as that of the predominance of planimetric organisation, a somewhat monotonous repetition of verticals and horizontals and a not entirely unobtrusive consonance of contours. In spite of all its apparent spontaneity, the whole is ultimately caught up in a network of not very flexible formulas. The fact that the whole system of relations is so cleverly camouflaged illustrates the special skill attained by the artist at this stage of his development" (186).

The Marcus Antonius Flaminius of this Fête gallante: "The Morning Star flies from the clouds and the bird cries to the dawn. / Amaryllis, awake! Lead your snowy sheep to pasture while the cold grass glitters with white dew. / To-day I will pasture my goats in a shady valley, for later it will be very hot. / Among those distant hills lies a very great valley cut by a fair stream. / Here there are cold rills and soft pasture and the kind wind engenders many-coloured flowers. / Dear, there I shall be alone, and if you love me, there you will come alone also." Or, better, Hymn III: "As a fragile and lovely fower unfolds its gleaming foliage on the breast-fold of the fostering earth, if the dew and rain draw it forth: thus doth my tender mind flourish if it be fed with the sweet dew of the Fostering Spirit. / Lacking this, it straightway beginneth to languish even as a flower born upon dry earth, if the dew and the rain tend it not."
To Flaminio via this from Pound, i.e. to this Flaminio: "I give you one simile from the Hercules and Hylas, where Hylas, " being a-wandered in the silent hills," comes to the " fountain filled with little gleamings." The nymphs seize him and bear him quickly away beneath the waters. 'As once in the splendor of the spring-time / A flying star drooped through the gloom of the night / Shone forth, then sank in the sea-deep.'"

That is (in "an aristocratic style in pastoral form--spiritual without being nervous, poetical without sentimentality, delicate without decadence," and, besides this, involving the quintessential and indispensable taste for paradox upon which Castiglione's sprezzatura pivots, in line with Pseudo-Dionysius and Meister Eckhart and countless afterward), the Flaminio of the aretē of Castiglione, the aretē that survives from the old aristocracy to the new (the Baudelairean aristocracy, the aesthetic one).

Be this the double of Her Who is beyond mind's touch, Ma Donna, whose name sits not well uncapitalized, Though this be Her double, even still be the facing face not out of reach:

Yes, that this is the freedom of the double, that the space of the doubling plays so free of world as that she who bestows her direct gaze, offers her visage whole, offered, that is, as the body of Beatrice by the lord of love ("Ne le sue braccia mi parea vedere una persona dormire nuda, salvo che involta mi parea in uno drappo sanguigno leggeramente"), is within the touch of the body of the mind.

"There was one face," and it was "not those girls," and nor was it the queen of heaven; no: It was my beloved.

Only thus, only if, that is, in Her double I find my beloved, only thus can I make the art of Pontormo (his Painting) my own. Otherwise I do not escape the aesthetics of the fragment,

which, handled however lightly, cannot express anything but piety, cannot be sung today in any key but that of nostalgia. Of course this plainte is the gesture most proper to all man, but if it consumes the being entire, then it is not redeemed; it remains empty, closed, fruitless, without Love that burns, alive.

With her face, sprites and nymphs lose their species-names, and become the Love which this world has not seen, or not in centuries.

Only in her face can that which has always been in Pontormo, and which I have known since I've known Pontormo, become mine, too. Without the full reception of the vision of the body of Beatrice, without meeting her frontal gaze frontally, those living today (those locked behind the piety of shortfalling craft) cannot be inhabited by the sacred fire which always burned in Pontormo--the same which led him beyond the closure which lay as a dormant flaw in the quattrocento, beyond Vasari, to the North, to the Gothic (which is--even--it must be added in passing--the élan vital that Bergson described, that gave life to Proust's objects and let them become not symbols but lifegiving agents of memoria, and that Duchamp would arrange in glass literary-material and other paintings), to the unbridled storm which Nietzsche and Dürer and Grünewald would each in his turn have taken, once, too far.

Landsknechte all these horse-dealers, freiherren all, and freiherren with titles won by halberd, won not by merit but in the transfigurative (yes, transfiguration is bivalent, not always salvific) incendium of their codpieces in a rage the question of whose justice or lack thereof is beside the point as soon as its fire catches.

Cf. Hauser on Pontormo: "The guards in The Resurrection not only recall Dürer's lansquenets, not only provide a striking foreground and draw a magic circle round the figure of Christ, but their whole physical constitution and attitude also have an earthly weight and substance which provide the desired impact by their contrast with the transfigured body of the Redeemer, His weightlessness and spirituality and His soaring towards heaven" (187 - 188).

Immediately following the above quote--but I copy this for a completely different reason--here Hauser helps me see in the Certosa Christ Before Pilate the ur-type of a different version of my

disegno ideale, that of tensed verticals and spatializing ellipses (here, “magical” foreshortened circles). “A similar magic circle surrounds Him in the scene before Pilate, only here the isolating, accentuating, and transfiguring effect of the arrangement is yet stronger, because He is surrounded by the busy people of everyday life [their eccentricity / entropy is exacerbating the always-latent ur-tension between central stable axis and centrifugal (yet gravitated, thus orbital) ellipse-plane] and appears in the bright light of day. [And see how, momentarily, Hauser notes a similar, correspondent exacerbation of the tensed verticality of the axis:] In this fresco the artist uses two devices, lightening of the colours and elongation of the forms, that are characteristic of the whole series but here are carried to extremes. In none of his earlier and only seldom in his later works does he elongate a figure to the extent he does in the case of Christ in this instance. Apart from the uncommonly tense relations between head and body, the slenderness of the spiritualised, dematerialised form is accentuated by the vertical folds of the robe and the servant who continues the upward line of the figure of Christ, a means that helps to emphasise both the central axis of the composition and the verticalism of the whole formal structure. The slenderness and delicacy of the figure of Christ is further increased by its being seen in profile; its broken line and slight forward tilt is full of a moving humility and gentle devoutness” (188).

19 June 2025

Three days ago I read, finally, Baxandall’s Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy. It was magnificent. One of the most interesting impressions it left on me is sparked by the angle from which the following sees painting and memory--the tension-site which was also the animating heart of Jean-Luc Nancy’s essay on Pontormo, Visitation: de la peinture chrétien.

“In the Church's view the purpose of images was threefold. John of Genoa's late thirteenth-century Catholicon, still a standard dictionary of the period, summarized them in this way: ‘Know that there were three reasons for the institution of images in churches. First, for the instruction of simple people, because they are instructed by them as if by books. Second, so that the mystery of the incarnation and the examples of the Saints may be the more active in our memory through being presented daily to our eyes. Third, to excite feelings of devotion, these being amused more effectively by things seen than by things heard.’ In a sermon published in 1492 the Dominican Fra Michele da Carcano gros an orthodox Quattrocento expansion of this: ‘... Images of the Virgin and the Saint were introduced for three reasons. First … Second … Third, they were introduced on account of our unreliable memory. Images were introduced because many people cannot train in their memories what they hear, but they do remember if they see images.’ If you commute these three reasons for images into instructions for the beholder, it amounts to using pictures as respectively lucid, vivid and readily accessible stimuli to meditation on the Bible and the lives of Saints. If you convert them into a brief for the painter,

they carry an expectation that the picture should tell its story in a clear was for the sample and in an eye-catching and memorable way for the forgetful, and with full use of all the emotional resources of the sense of sight, the most powerful is well as the most precise of the senses" (41).

Like many quotations about quattocento painting from contemporary sources, these can be taken as surprising for a certain kind of insensitivity, an inevitable shock in its registration of the not having happened yet of all that comes between that moment and this. And yet, in its conception of painting-and-memory, there is the registration of the seed of what, finally, makes painting essential.

But here is where it gets deep; I quote extensively and skip around. The crux is at the site of "interchangeable types." "So it is important before all else to know roughly what sort of activity this was. One handbook that is usefully explicit is the Zardino de Oration, the Garden of Prayer, written for young girls in 1454 and later printed in Venice. The book explains the need or internal representations and their place in the process of prayer: ' The better to impress the story of the Passion on your mind, and to memorise each action of it more easily, it is helpful and necessary to fix the places and people in your mind: a city, for example, which will be the city of Jerusalem-taking for this purpose a city that is well known to you. In this city find the principal places in which all the episodes of the Passion would have taken place--for instance, a palace with the supper-room where Christ had the Last Supper with the Disciples, and the house of Anne, and that of Caiaphas, with the place where Jesus was taken in the night, and the room where He was brought before Caiaphas and mocked and beaten. Also the residence of Pilate where he spoke with the Jews, and in it the room where Jesus was bound to the Column. Also the site of Mount Calvary, where he was put on the Cross; and other like places. … And then too you must shape in your mind some people, people well-known to you, to represent for you the people involved in the Passion-the person of Jesus Himself, of the Virgin, Saint Peter, Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Mary Magdalen, Anne, Caiaphas, Pilate, Judas and the others, every one of whom you will fashion in your mind. When you have done all this, putting all your imagination into it, then go into your chamber. Alone and solitary, excluding every external thought from your mind, start thinking of the beginning of the Passion, starting with how Jesus entered Jerusalem on the ass. Moving slowly from episode to episode, meditate on each one, dwelling on each single stage and step of the story. And if at any point you feel a sensation of piety, stop: do not pass on as long as that sweet and devout sentiment lasts. ... ' This sort of experience, a visualizing meditation on the stories particularized to the point of perhaps setting them in one's own city and casting them from one's own acquaintance, is something most of us now lack. It gave the painter's exterior visualizations a curious function. The painter could not compete with the particularity of the private representation. When beholders might approach his painting with preconceived interior pictures of such detail, each person's different, the painter did not as a rule try to give detailed characterizations of people and places: it would have been an interference with the individual's private visualization if he had. Painters especially popular in pious circles, like Perugino (plate 22), painted people who are general, unparticularized, interchangeable types. They provided a base firmly concrete and very evocative in its patterns of people on which the pious beholder could impose his personal detail, more particular but less structured than what the painter offered. It was not only a painter like Perugino that worked within conditions of this kind, though his response to them was much appreciated. A great deal of the quality of the most central experiences of Quattrocento painting-let us say, of Masaccio's Tribute Money (plate 65) or Bellini's Transfiguration (Colour Plate II) derives from the same situation. Bellini does not offer

the detail of persons and places the public provided for itself. He com-plements the beholder's interior vision. His persons and places are generalized and yet massively concrete, and they are mar-shalled in patterns of strong narrative suggestion. Neither of these qualities, the concrete and the patterned, are what the beholder provided for himself since you cannot provide these qualities in mental images, as a little introspection shows; neither could come fully into play before the physical sense of sight was actually resorted to. The painting is the relic of a cooperation between Bellini and his public: the fifteenth-century experience of the Transfiguration was an interaction between the paint-ing, the configuration on the wall, and the visualizing activity of the public mind a public mind with different furniture and dispositions from ours. We enjoy the Transfiguration, the painter's part in all this, because we are stimulated by its imbalance, its hypertrophy of the weightily concrete and eloquently patterned at the permissible expense of the particular, which Bellini could count on being contributed by the other side. We should only deceive ourselves if we thought we can have the experience of the Transfiguration Bellini designed, or that it expresses in any simple way a spirit or a state of mind" (46 - 48).

Ca. 2022 I became interested in the "heavenly vision," via St. Augustine, etc. This is a good furtherance of that interest, still simmering. " … On the Sensible Delights of Heaven, printed in Venice in 1490 and a very complete account of these matters, distinguishes three kinds of improvement on our mortal visual experience: a greater beauty in the things seen, a greater keenness in the sense of sight, and an infinite variety of objects for vision. The greater beauty lies in three particulars: more intense light, clearer colour, and better proportion (above all in the body of Christ) ; the greater keenness of sight includes a superior capacity to make discriminations between one shape or colour and another, and the ability to penetrate both distance and intervening solids. As another treatise with the same title, Celso Maffei's On the Sensible Delights of Heaven of 1504, summed up: 'Vision will be so keen that the slightest differences in colour and variations in form will be discernible, and it will not be impeded by distance or by the interposition of solid bodies.' The last of these notions is the strangest to us; Bartholomew Rimbertinus had explained the thinking behind it: 'An intervening object does not impede the vision of the blessed ... If Christ, even though himself in heaven after his Ascension, saw his dear Mother still on earth and at prayer in her chamber, clearly distance and the interposition of a wall does not hinder their vision. The same is true when an object's face is turned away from the viewer so that an opaque body intervenes ... Christ could see the face of his mother when she was prostrate on the ground... as if he were looking directly at her face. It is clear that the blessed can see the front of an object from the back, the face through the back of the head.'"

The last sentence here is a beautiful detail, of an almost Proust-Murasaki (Scarry) kind: "... the contracts point to a sophistication about blues, a capacity to discriminate between one and another, with which our own culture does not equip us. In 1408 Gherardo Starnina contracted to paint in S. Stefano at Empoli frescoes, now lost, of the Life of the Virgin. The contract is meticulous about blue: the ultramarine used for Mary is to be of the quality of two florins to the ounce, while for the rest of the picture ultramarine at one florin to the ounce will do. Importance

is registered with a violet tinge.”

The following day, Tuesday, I read most of Alpers and Baxandall’s Tiepolo: The Pictorial Intelligence. Here is what struck me:

An appearance of the “baby vision” concept / cliché: “That repetition and indeterminacy should be combined and that, combined, they should reinforce each other is not surprising. We are familiar with the phenomenon in many media - from the patterns of textile or wallpaper design to music or the dance. But our experience of Tiepolo is one of defamiliarization, as if seeing itself were pushed back to a earlier stage: one must work to make things out. The least regarded or expressive parts of face or body elliptically take the place of the whole.”

And, later, an even more intense broaching thereof: “Tiepolo's medium is, then, analytic rather than constitutive of the viewer's response. He is regressive in the particular sense of imagining a return to a more primitive level of the operation of the mind and to the world being constructed there. He lingers on, and delights in, the lack of certainty, the lack of closure that forms not fully recognized or realized provide. Ellipsis works not only as a part instead of a whole, but as parts held back from implying a whole.”

Tiepolo’s difference-repetition, “units” here making to emerge a related but distinct notion to what appeared in Baxandall’s Quattrocento book (quoted above) were broached as “interchangeable types”:

“... called parallel play. But things look different if we do not insist on narrative enactment. A unit consists of the same figural pose multiplied: head tilted at an angle of attention, arm bent at elbow ending in a hand with fingers flexed, thumb and index finger extended. This attentive pose is a favourite (pl. s). It is as though the artist's lay figure arranged in one position had been rotated, reversed, repeated and reduced to produce a compound unit patterned consistently within itself. Splitting or division can also make a unit: agitated exclamation at the left of The Finding of Moses is parcelled out between the pieces of two hal-berdiers and the full-length little woman (pl. 7). The elements of such a Tiepolo unit are differentiated by conventional types: old woman attendant/young princess, aged river-god/youthful nymph. On the Galleria ceiling at Palazzo Clerici, just above the astonished fisherboy, river-god, nymph and the fisherboy twin are combined to form an assemblage of angled heads, prominent bent arms, draperies and a single leg. its length enhanced by association with an oar (pls 22, 25). The cloth tossed over the river-god's shoulder is both his cloak and the hem of the nymph's robe. Old age, youth and childhood, faces averted and expressionless, tightly interlocking. Extended painting like that at Palazzo Clerici is assembled out of a number of such highly designed, independent units previously worked up in pen-and-wash drawings. (Units are markedly not a concern of the oil sketches that usually follow such drawings and precede the fresco painting in Tiepolo's inventive process. It seems likely that a modello in which worked-out units appear is outside of the normal inventive

process.) A unit is generic in nature. While groups of drawings have been associated with a commissioned task, they are not preparatory in an ordinary sense. Hence the difficulty of establishing those precise drawing-to-painting connections one tends to expect. The unit is also a matrix that has certain features: individual elements have multiple functions; figures are combined instead of subordinated one to another; clothes and other objects are mixed on equal terms with body parts. Moses' tiny left wrist and clenched hand contribute to the lower handmaiden's large left thumb, and a new appendage results, mimicking the hand above it to the left (pl. 6). The hand above, the right hand of the lower handmaiden, is also a conglomerate that, owing to the handling of the light, presents itself in two ways: a dominant view made up of thumb above with index pointing, and a recessive alternative in which the lit edge of the palm forms a thumb below with index finger in the place of the thumb above. Three furls of drapery (pl. s) - a lower, green one replacing absent thigh and leg; a middle one an extension of the blue bodice; a pale upper one accounted for only by reference to the other two - register movement and also balance" (16).

This same analytic, zoomed out slightly to accommodate a (very Contemporary) vision of the practice of art: "... to create for himself a corpus of pictorial precedents off which he could work. / Most renaissance pictures are of established subjects - by which we mean subjects that were painted repeatedly. The study of iconography has emphasized the identification of the subjects of images and of the objects they depict, often with reference to specific textual sources. Painters are praised for their close attention to a text. This calls attention to differences between pictures at what might loosely be called the subject and object level. It has diverted attention from the prevalence of repetition. Pictorial narrative depends on acquaintance with prior pictures more than it does on acquaintance with prior texts. One interest a painter had in painting, and viewers in looking at, an Annunciation or a Crucifixion, a Venus and Adonis or a Finding of Moses was as the reworking of previous paintings of the subject. When subject matter is a pictorial given, the interest lies in what a painter can do with the picture. The difference lies in the painting."

These dogs become mascots for this, along with clouds and the above "old woman attendant/ young princess, aged river-god/youthful nymph." I wrote "The sections on dogs and clouds treat species interchangeable with my sprites; mine them for the kind of variants I am to imbue thereinto":

The section analyzing Tiepolo's drawing procedure is exhilaratingly formalized, and could teach anyone how to think in the terms of this kind of analytic. Just an excerpt of it: "For many painters the move from underdrawing of this type to pen overdrawing would have been a moment when a commitment was made to one or another of the alternatives tried out in chalk or pencil. With Tiepolo this is rarely so. The pen overdrawing tends to be a new drawing, in a new medium, in which a fresh and differently paced design is essayed. The underdrawing's contribution to a solution is mainly to state a problem or let problems state themselves; these will be worked on above with ink, in a different register. Tiepolo's practice - if he had continued

working on K222 recto - would have been to try a fairly decisive, independent pen drawing over the graphite, and this drawing would probably have then been followed by a set of other quite varied pen drawings over progressively more laconic underdrawings, a process of serial problem statement, essay at sol-ution, and problem restatement."

"We tend, and there is evidence in the tradition that bears this out, to associate a painter's love of the medium with his love of his paint. This is to identify the painter's medium with his materials as such. There are some occasions - the lush touches placing poppies and grasses on the well-lit wall at Udine, low and close enough to touch - when Tiepolo displays love of his medium in this limited sense. He savoured the activity of depositing pen and wash on paper, oil on canvas."

I mean something closely related to this whenever I speak of imitating certain lushnesses of Grotjahn brushstrokes, etc.

Mage!: "The oddities are immediately striking: beside a ruined monument set amid tree-trunks a distinctive assemblage of figures - a magus, youths clothed and naked, an occasional impassive woman and grouped torsos bearing massive heads - is looking at a curious array of stuffs, including decapitated heads, burning altars, punchinellos, snake-entwined staffs, owls and bits of sculpted reliefs. There is precedence for Tiepolo's manner of etching and the mysterious trappings in the etchings of the seventeenth-century Castiglione. Perhaps, in the materials depicted, as in the puzzlement they provoke, Tiepolo was coming up with a new pictorial equivalent to the 'incantesimo" or sorcery commonly attributed to Veronese. But the Scherzi remain elusive, haunting. Convinced that there is a code to break, some modern commentators have invoked the practice of alchemy, magic and the specialized taste of collectors as explanation. They have not had much success. What can be said pictorially is that the mysterious array of objects that puzzles the commentators was designed to provoke the curiosity and attention of the assembled beholders. They are not essential: a pen-and-wash drawing for the Scherzo of The Magician and Other Figures looking at a Burning Pyre with a Man's Head shows the attitudes in place without the trappings (pl. 19)."

And: That river-gods are uncle-alchemists, too.

I noted to myself, while reading, "I seek corpuscularity rather than (this) corporeality "; I'd just read this obliquely related line: "We are accustomed to making a distinction between two- and

three-dimensional representations. A lack of spatial relationship between object and observer is characteristic of a two-dimensional (sometimes called 'decorative') image, while a clearly defined spatial relationship between object and observer makes for illusionistic corporeality. Tiepolo's painting has a bit of both, but fits neither fully. There is an interest in visual knowledge of the world, but his figures lack the full corporeality of figures that appear to us as if in space."

As an aside, I learned this from Wikipedia: "The popular rival to opera seria was opera buffa, the 'comic' opera that took its cue from the improvisatory commedia dell'arte. An opera seria had a historical or Biblical subject, whereas an opera buffa had a contemporary subject." And there is this figure, "Caricature of a performance of Handel's Flavio, featuring three of the best-known opera seria singers of their day: Senesino on the left, diva Francesca Cuzzoni in the centre, and art-loving castrato Gaetano Berenstadt on the right":

Entirely on my flights this past weekend, I read Italo Calvino's Invisible Cities, and was stunned at its gorgeousness, at a kind of narrative-craft I'd heard tell of but did not believe in. I made these notes to myself on my last plane:

"After us the savage god" (Yeats?), In the twilight of an empire, golden filaments invisible through the haze, glimmers latent in the dark, light at which we can only grope, under the spell of the witch-god who has succeeded to the old one under the same name (invisible cities 30-31: "At times even the names of the inhabitants remain the same, and their voices' accent, and also the features of the faces; but the gods who live beneath names and above places have gone off without a word and outsiders [algorithm, capital, commodified attention] have settled in their place. It is pointless to ask whether the new ones are better than the old, since there is no connection between them ..."; I think of Paris, which I cannot live in because it is no longer there, the Brasserie Lipp and the Closerie des Lilas now themselves phantasmagoria of even the same Klossowskian sort that always filled them). The savage god who rapes eyes, rapes unto senselessness. We live in his city now (Los Angeles), a city of the second kind here: "[there are] those that through the years and the changes continue to give their form to desires [Paris, Venice; these desires, then, are dreams, imagination], and those in which desires either erase the city or are erased by it [Los Angeles, Moscow, Beijing, now all; these desires are the totalizing ones, capital, spectacle, control]" (35).

In come the horse dealers. (Through their mouths speaks the savage god.)

Separately: I have often felt the instinct to make this true of my paintings: "from the number of imaginable cities [paintings generable from the conjugation of elements of a gesture-vocabulary] we must exclude [must not paint] those whose elements are assembled without a connecting thread, an inner rule, a perspective, a discourse. [And I think I ought to press harder

into perspective, make it do different things in my paintings, Piranesian things that strain the picture's placidity, tense its balance.] With cities, it is as with dreams: everything imaginable can be dreamed, but even the most unexpected dream is a rebus that conceals a desire or, its reverse, a fear. Cities [paintings], like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret [even if the conceit is, as in Mallarmé, hidden, never shown], their rules are absurd [their vocabularies arbitrary as axioms], their perspectives deceitful [Piranesian], and everything conceals something else" (43-44). The next thing said is the Khan's assertion that he has neither desires nor fears, that all is composed either by the mind (Cartesian reason) or by chance; Polo refutes, saying neither the mind nor chance suffices on its own: necessary is the musical jointure of the two nullifies, their rhythmic folding-together, necessary even if mysterious.

That Ludovic Nemo is to be doubled, as I once suggested; that, like Asle's namesake and the double in Souffleur, their conflation is to reach the apogee of its tension in that it renders love impossible and uniquely possible, in that they share every climax, or share in missing it, absented always simultaneously and at the other's expense; and between them (in two senses) are such extases (violent and erotic) as "Even when lovers twist their naked bodies, skin against skin, seeking the position that will give one the most pleasure in the other, even when murderers plunge the knife into the black veins of the neck and more clotted blood pours out the more they press the blade that slips between the tendons …" (53) and "conversations, surprises, caresses, bites … meetings, seductions, copulations, orgies are consummated among them without a word exchanged, without a finger touching anything, almost without an eye raised" (51) and "At any hour, raising your eyes among the pipes, you are likely to glimpse a young woman, or many young women, slender, not tall of stature, luxuriating in the bathtubs or arching their backs under the showers suspended in the void, washing or drying or perfuming themselves, or combing their long hair at a mirror. In the sun, the threads of water fanning from the showers glisten, the jets of the taps, the spurts, the splashes, the sponges' suds" (49) and "in Hypatia you have to go to the stables and riding rings to see the beautiful women who mount the saddle, thighs naked, greaves on their calves, and as soon as the young foreigner approaches, they fling him on the piles of hay or sawdust and press their firm nipples against him" (48).

Are "decumanus" and "cardo" nothing more nor less than my vertical axes and plane-implicative ellipses?

"… their sober but tasty cuisine, which evokes an ancient golden age: rice and celery soup, boiled beans, fried squash flowers" (161).

If I paint a sphinx, and thus open a species of chimères alongside my sprites (my little bons dieux), I ought to conjugate through this list: "Sphinxes, griffons, chimeras, dragons, hircocervi, harpies, hydras, unicorns, basilisks" (160).

The last lines of the book are adequate words, and ones ringing with Calvino's Kundera-light stylistic imprint, for the nature of the re-Symbolist "project," which finds beauty, when it does, always in the fold of pursuit. "There are two ways to escape suffering of [the inferno of the living]. The first is easy for many: accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension: seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space" (165).

I thought of Robert Ryman and Sarah Rapson, for some reason, in passing, during the wedding mass, and later much more, as I recovered from the heat:

The words “Disciple, behold, discipline” fixed in my mind after several other preliminary recombinations, and somehow associated with a painting idea.

(Sarah Rapson is the name of the artist this idea reminded me of: Stretch a canvas over not quite all of a scavenged aluminum frame, the upper two thirds, say, and then stretch another strip of cloth vertically over it, before applying the 15 coats of gesso and sanding them; the frame to be, roughly, 8in wide by 16 tall; I can do this multiple times, with different combinations of Grotjahn-type or Emma-type of Jake-type substrate recipes, and also changing the variables I above specified. But is this just rapson, but not as cool? Or, what I am trying to distill is between the artists I name here, and Nahmad at the brasserie; but I don’t feel great or quite comfortable about the way this distillation is / is not different from Rapson’s.

Then, while on the plane, I added the rest below:

“The trouble with the Corbusier Cabanon drawing is that, as yet, it is much too full, as was the first wall painting. I need, without collapsing into Merlin James nor Sarah Rapson nor Mark Grotjahn nor Robert Ryman, to pare down, to continue to pare down even while continuing to conjugate, so that, somehow, what remains will be a misty and faint image, even if encrusted with vanishing filaments of the most lush paint-texture, and yet will retain the sense of having been attained from a vocabulary of recombination.

The frames I had planed with the L and the T extrusions, mitred, in the two different possible rotations for each, are to be applied to aluminum panels, and to wood ones, and even to some variant of the new idea (the rare idea in canvas!), namely, a sparse one, one that can take the frame. And my old gessoed-knit can be brought back, and a new one of it can finally receive its grain-misted form--not a tachiste gesture, I still insist on tensile balance, Matissean pulmonary stability-instability somehow even in the spare world I'm now imagining which dwells in the inframince, the baudelairean-abstraction residue of the juxtaposition (in one painting!) of two or three different approaches to the same “supersmooth” (different substrates, different coat counts, different superpositions). And I’m not to forget that a drill press makes a mark, a beautiful and almost iridescent one, and so does the L saw.

I believe, still, that the sprites can live even here. The sprites that are, like Calvino’s lares and penates, “too tiny to be seen and too numerous to be counted” (78), bright gods and Tuscan (at times), upon the clouds that bowe over the lake, or moving upon the waters as a spirit of breath that bears no name, or a Rabelaisian chimère that in pissing his absinthe makes present all the plumbing which intercollates flows and ejaculations (a mystery all its own), or an infant amorino somehow gestured into the role (but not the guise) of the lord of love who bears in his arms the body of Beatrice clothed only in a (silk?) garment, draped or wrapped, not worn, colore di fiamma (sp.?).

When I inevitably gather the traces of the “tradition” whose often-dislocated components are the substrate of my “re-Symbolism” (a name still insufficient and to be replaced: with “spa town”?), will they be seen to be a doing-again of a making string of old dreams? Ought they? I don’t think so. And yet I believe in the tra-ditio. I mean neither to destroy nor to dredge and enthrone (as Iñes de Castro, from the deep). Perhaps a Duchamp-Grotjahn-Lieberman humor establishes all

the distinction from Pound I’m ever to need.”

On Monday I wrote, “At the end of the first “Hermit in Paris” [collection by Italo Calvino] essay, about Turin, the comment about the role of nature there inspired a contrasting idea in me about that in Los Angeles. Here, nature is the view through golden mists in green hills, the marine layer turning the stand of palms on Hollywood’s crown into a paradiso terrestre, the paradisiac bathing strip of Thousand Steps. It is a matter of Eden, its palpability and its impossibility. It is thus of a piece with America, where the prime effort of capitalism has been long since realized. Where we go from here has more to do with what the Parisian or Viennese or Venetian decadents can tell us than what the Turinese antifascisti can, even though the style and the example of these latter appear as august, as heroic, as ever. ”

20 June 2025

Listening to Roxy Music, another idea that has to do with the Pontormo drawing I keep repeating (U6557), including first and charcoal and then in fountain pen this morning.
It's like a large cat, like the one from Samuel Hindolo or the one from a Roxy album cover (For Your Pleasure), standing over a figure like the Pontormo one who's seated upright so that the cat and the figure are facing perpendicular directions, left flank is pressed against the figure’s chest and upper abdomen, and the cat is curving to the left, hugging the figure’s surface; and this pair is repeated either twice or three times, and for each of these groups, the figure’s back is to the backs of the figure of the other groups, and perhaps the figure turns like Pontormo’s, her head to the right so that the gaze-circuit is in countersense to the cat-circuit; legs are apart, but the cat's legs are outside her lap. The difficulty is in construing the surface of the wall or ledge that she sits on: If she straddles it (as she might), that is, if it is a wall, its top surface has to be wide enough for cats’ feet on either side of the figure's legs; but maybe I can elide this difficulty, and the conflict of the question of what the left cat’s front legs and the right cat's back legs are resting on will sit nicely as unresolved.

21 June 2025

In the course of my course of copying Pontormo drawings (from the back pages of Clapp) with charcoal, fountain pen, and ultrafine sharpie (this as tonic to my circulation at high speed without absolute motion, as though in Dante's second cerchio--tonic in hope and in thrilling realization, I have been laying myself to bed with a happiness so embedded in my body that I've been telling of to Bella, because I can see my hand changing before my eyes, just as with my canvas-stretching etc.), in oscillation with my slow progress through the essay in this 1915 (?) monograph (but not in strict parallel), certain among them have taken on great significance to me. On a level with the note above on one face, though these others I've managed to keep in an active devotion-attention (attentio: Aquinas, Weil) without words for some time, some several days.

U6557 for its tightrope gender-oscillation (though Bella promptly called it a "girl"), the extraordinarily charged contact between the body and what supports it (where is the contact, what is straddled, how the foremost thigh with its ineffable shape--heroic in a way completely aside from the Michelangelesque feminine heroism (that of his sibylls), heroic precisely in its softness, its smoothness, Botticelli here is seen to live right alongside Michelangelo in his Florentine heart, this thigh is that of Diana and in every identical instant that of Apollo too).

I breathed some life into my hand with charcoal, and then, immediately turning to pen, I managed to catch something--not everything, not by miles, but still, something--in the contours, setting them down.

I show some of these drawings to Bella; of my drawing of the Visitation Virgin's double, she had things to say which deeply discouraged me, but life is long, drawing is a capacious road for the disciple, wide and reaching out ahead without measure.

Even if this man be sainted in theory, whoever he may be, the head superposed before his hips makes this an unforgettable composition-instant in which the earth-immersed mind can sound out all its anguishes, longings, anxieties, pain, exstases (and, note, the composition-instant is one of the three or four most shining mediums of Pontormo's unparalleled genius; what I mean by this ought to be clear from any swift-nudes-idea-sensitive look at the Visitation or the Deposition, the holy-mythic-erotic figures in each plotting out a geometry built not of points and lines, hardly of curves, but of heavenly body itself). I have to vulgarise: there is a pair here, there is a pair in each of a series of memory-instants / configuration-images which I cannot escape, the ones which agonise, and ones which open glimpses into eternity; in the terms of analogies between the pair in the drawing and the pair in any of these memorial-immemorial jointures in my mind, the correspondences flicker among the possible permutations (he is I and she is she; he is she and she is I; I am he and she is she; I am she and she is he) and--what could not have been foreseen--fix themselves in the contradictory spaces between these permutational alternatives.

This is the indispensability of the uncle-alchemist, somehow scélérat and art-eternal.

With U6660 I lifted my pen and failed. No matter. I became tethered to it because of the geometric-calligram in its central section, a geometric-calligram like certain of those of Mathieu (on his letterhead, or for the outré-allure publication). Then, I thought of Ubu, guignol, and Kleist's marionettes when, in trying to copy the curves and curve-configurations to the lower right and lower left of the largest disc, I felt that something in Pontormo's compositional procedure was being opened to me in these preliminary / successional / diagrammtic ideas--an idea almost precisely identical with the concept of "diagram" Deleuze elaborated for Bacon, the instant of chaos introduced as an initiatory lacuna which must be impossibly or paradoxically traversed in order to get at figuration which lies always on the other side of that caesura (here a Nancyean syncope). And then the image repeated on the left and right margins of the sheet fixed themselves in my mind-eye as something between an Eden-expulsion and a couple appearing together (in the only way they can) in apocalyptic time (at time's end, not alone before God's vision, because somehow that is even less conceivable). The way these two cling into each other, the way their double gaze is one, the way they share a central ("third") leg.

23 June 2025

During work, I wrote:

"Having finished the Alpers Baxandall Tiepolo and the Zac-recommended lecture on Guston, and returned my mind (with the humble but sincere assistance of a cigarette, after the maniera of Guston: "eating, smoking, painting" or something) to work on the problem of how to reconcile my Pontormo-esque figure-forms with my repetition-difference walls-spaces, I had two ideas. First is to sit a sprite on a Poggio-type ledge, low on the panel, maybe one with a wall off to the side along one edge of the panel; a flat backing of ambiguous Tiepolo-sky or Poggio-wall texture (I.e. in the wheelhouse of Vermeer, Hammershoi, and Balthus walls)—and, crucially, in

this first idea, to hang the panel eventually up high on a wall, its lower edge some ways above my eyeline. A second idea: To hang at a more wonted height, and to offset the difference with the inclusion of some kind of garland, or the upper edge (w at least one corner) of a window, inside the panel's upper edge; then, the sprite becomes more integrated into my space-project with its site-vocabularies: like Calvino's lares and penates, my sprites can (authentically, or, better, vocabulary-avowably) inhabit a window sill."

Then I despaired softly throughout the afternoon and evening, down on life and art. Nothing seemed new or worth working on.

Then, in the shower, I thought that I could use tricks of mirrors and lenses to do just that, in silvery white oil paint on aluminum grounds such as I've created and become excited about, with this very Pontormo drawing, amounting to an effect and process (an effect-out-of-process) not unlike that in my Colombian pot drawn in hatch-pointillist graphite and crystalline-iridescent-refracted into oil pastels, which hangs in my room again now.

Silvery white, and look at that thigh and knee, which is not a pareidolic commentary inserted by me, but is rather entirely present in the original, see it for yourself.

Or, and, instead of copying the full tonal range ("grayscale") of the little reproduction I was setting up to copy here (for training purposes), I can condense the tonal range to a very tight ripple of whites, perhaps with tinges of two blues and ochre and Naples yellow (perhaps though only the barest traces if so--and actually, more likely, I want to stick to white).

And I want to do more of this, and more, on such aluminum-bar and wood-scrap and supersmooth-linen bricolages as I thought of during Matthew's mass. I'm not sure if my own take on the barely-there is individual enough to stand up in a conversation with Sarah Rapson's (or Robert Ryman's, or Cy Twombly's, etc.)--but I do know that I really have something to say with these techniques: That the inframince is a medium par excellence for precisely what it was that Hantaï drew ever close to, that which Nancyean abstention precludes me from calling the sublime; that there is nothing going on below the table here, that all is Baudelaire-abstraction, frank and real and all before your eyes, and that the fleur bleue blooms in the fraying edges of the trace anyway, and that I really am trying to be a medium for Pontormo's grace (the highest one, in the Visitation and the Capponi chapel; there is a more carpenter-like beauty which nonetheless floors you in the Certosa frescoes, and a more Flaminiesque or Mallarmé-faune one at Poggio, which stand apart from what I'm talking about here, off to their own sides), and that my aluminum coffee cup will somehow find its way into these …

24 June 2025

I forgot my headphones, and in the inability to grasp at words I attained a state of thought not unlike the cigarette-aided one out of which I yesterday wrought my idea of the putto-ledge; it was the milling of poplar that unlocked it, making “a clip” of them (this was Alec’s term for the “incredible” (Peter’s term) amount I was to make) with no sustaining verbal stimulus.

And in this imagination I began to have words, images, ripostes, and maneuvers follow upon each other with the unwilled succession proper to dreams. I came home and, through great static toil, distilled it (disciple’s discipline, Rapson, Ryman, Pontormo-devotion, and Hantaï-devotion in that what I learned when in 2019 (Wood poster) or 2021 (summer of pivot) I set about to learn “everything” about art was that the most enormous weight is indissociably married to the most Nancy-excruciatingly rigorously lightest touch and that the motion or music underlying this principle is the same which underlies all (erotic) restraint (cf. Hantaï on amour courtois etc.). I attach the below photo which is not the distillation itself but which does only just exactly enough to bring me one step closer to its receding horizon.

25 June 2025

After weeks of searching, I finally found a way to pirate “Ryman’s Tact” from Painting as Model. Bois starts by stalling, or hesitating, not without delivering a gem of a naming (in a handful of words) for something--a pattern of thought, a tic, a point-of-view--I know all too well.

“Like the hunt for sources that used to take place in literary studies, or the search for the motif in art history (find the improbable valley that was the source of inspiration for this engraving by Seghers or this drawing by Claude Lorrain), the narrative of process establishes a primary meaning, an ulti-mate, originating referent that cuts off the interpretive chain. That is, an aesthetic of causality is reintroduced, a positivist monologue that we thought modern art was supposed to have gotten rid of: A (paintbrush) + B (paint) + C (support) + D (the manner in which these are combined) give E (painting). There would be nothing left over in this equation.

Given E, ABCD could be deciphered, absolutely. By making the artist a kind of engineer who solves a problem of many parameters in his work (Ryman, the experimenter, does in fact often speak in these terms), the discussion ofprocess in art is refitted to this heuristic mold. The object of this critical discourse then would seem to be: given the solution (the painter's "eureka"), find the problem."

I say "all too well": Recently, in fact yesterday while I was milling, I thought to myself that I might say that my chief vice is my tendency (concupiscentia specifica / pecularis) to overreach for control (the verb here is the same as the harpazo, "grasp at," in Paul's ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἁρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ)--in general, but most consequentially in trying to think my paintings into being. (The question whose answer this is was in my mind probably because several days ago Bella asked me what I believed to be my chief vice; I gave my longstanding answer, "lack of energy"; she countered that this answer did not have enough agency in it, so I adjusted to "sloth.")

Quite out of character for Bois, this essay contains precious little actual looking; still, even in the pointers to that precious materia-contact, I find sustaining nourishment. Into his last word, I read one of the animating insistences of Nancy, which is also one of the indispensabilities of Hantaï: each time anew (or each one), above all not every time (never all). (Not technically the end of the text, but nonetheless the note he lands on: "Ryman also realizes that when the norms of painting are put to the test, what is arbitrary will have the last word." I read the same thing into other utterances on Ryman outside this text; Vittorio Colaizzi: "While Ryman shares the rigid anti-illusionism of many artists of his generation, his work also has important connections with the jazz music that brought him to New York in the first place and with the abstract expressionist gesture painting he encountered as a guard at the Museum of Modern Art. ... The temporality inherent in Ryman's singular, "one-time" stroke sets him apart from the similarly reductive early paintings of Frank Stella, which seek a more unified impact and are less closely tied to their own procedure."; and, cited by Bois in a footnote, Thierry de Duve, who, "assuming the relative irreproducibility of Ryman's paintings, clarifies some theoretical connections between them and photography and speaks about what there is of the auratic in them that is resistant to it. ("Ryman irreproductible," Parachute, no. 20 [Fall 1980), 18-21)." In all of this, I find reinforcement for my studies-as-practice (particularly, studies as "modular" (? I don't know whether I can really retain this term) but not interchangeable composition-units which in turn still beg unique arrangement-synthesis into pictures), whose emblem is the silverpoint and the oil-paint stroke on the uniquely-bricolé support. (Does this mean it will never get easier?)

Another angle, far too simplified, but still: It is important to me to find in my studies of Pontormo the same arbitrariness, the same irreducible aliveness, that Ryman always found in the facts of the painting medium.

Maintaining the right to controvert myself later, I provisionally assert that in my new painting (Arlequino 1) I very specifically (i) study in freehand silverpoint (ii) lens-trace from freehand study and (iii) lens-trace from digital photograph, to sensitize the axis (call it "alive hand" or the manual incorporation of point-of-view) along which these procedures space themselves; and I

very specifically do not affix a printed digital photograph to the surface, because such a procedure lies not on this my sensitized axis, not even beyond some threshold I set, but rather off the axis entirely, and the viewer is meant to be alert to this disconnect because of the sensitization of the axis itself. The heart of the matter is a notion of tradition, transmission of spirited form like glowing water; the various means (even the last one, through the jpeg) of discipleship which the axis scans keep it alive, while the blurring of a jpeg, or, worse, the jpegesque but actually antagonistically interested blurring of a selection algorithm, irreparably break that fil lumineux, that continuum which, like life itself, we cannot properly see or grasp but can only keep alive, with great care.

A fitting subtitle (I say this not quite in seriousness) for my Spa Town: A Summa Pictorica would be Or: Anything But Painting. Even I regularly marvel at the lengths I will go to, ever excrescing in words what almost everyone else (or, better, if I am true, what everyone else) would take as excuse enough to paint.

If I apply titles like “Painting (Arlequino I)” and “Painting (Murs et plafonds 11092020)” and “Painting (Murs 1946.1.1),” that they be not registrarial nor even quite faux-registrarial, but rather that they be evocative acts carefully crafted to create a very precise fragrance, or aura, or mist, with a lightness that demands freedom from any actual alphanumeric system even while demanding the freedom to Baudelaire-abstract the precise effect of the systems and entities evoked. E.g. the initiatory character and the Italian (Pontormo, and something loosely triangulated by Fontana and Burri in back-extension of Rapson) character of the mind-state which I distilled into the painting called “Arlequino I,” and the provisionally-identifying source material for the other two mentioned (borrowing a date of an opening and what I think is a Zervos number), and the Hantaïan syntax (“Peinture (Mariales),” e.g.), and even more specifically within this syntax retaining what I thought to be an almost provocatively insistent gesture in the choice (to be laconically pointed out upon any inquiry of about-ness) of “Painting” as each-time-repeated title, my thought very soon reinforced by Bois’s comment in “Ryman’s Tact” that such a practice is “essentialist” or something.

Saving here the links, again, to Michel Carrouges Machines célibataires / Duchamp / Large glass / bride stripped bare . Jean-louis couturier materials:

https://collection-morel.com/nantes/silent-motors/

https://collection-morel.com/nantes/supplements/

https://collection-morel.com/nantes/supplements/texte-jlc/

https://collection-morel.com/nantes/carrouges/carrouges-le-chene/

In an 032c article on Twombly's Vogue spread: "Describing Twombly's airy composition, Barthes commented that it "allows one to breathe better." It surrenders openly to the viewer's imagination. "Basically, Twombly's paintings are big mediterranean rooms, hot and luminous, with their elements looking lost and which the mind wants to populate," Barthes rhapsodized. In the context of his essay, this simple image, and its evocation of life and practice, unlocks Twombly's magic."

28 June 2025

Yeseterday at 4 a.m., having been awoken, probably, by the red wine we had with dinner (an effect that I really hate, if indeed it's true; my mother and her mother both held it so), I lay in bed and these lines settled in my head:

And go now let me sing of a time when
Under milk green hill and pain of perjury
Ludovic Nemo did a stout silence keep
And choked against it these tumbleform years
And strained and slipped that the blanket white night
Keep clean of him, his jester's gesture word.

So I suppose this belongs in the aggregation of excrescences of the sleeping-waking oscillation, as a sort of misfire. It seems a suitable way to begin a non-initial section, at any rate. I also noted, separately: “And when I need stand-in names to be able to use all I’ve written as “re-Symbolism” notes, to make palpable the fil lumineux, the tensing of which is, really, the whole weight of the gesture of making my only spare marks to be (puttiphallic) studies after the master, I can use names like Bernard (or a Magyarized version thereof: Bernát) Marton, or Frei Carlos (or his full name, though he doesn’t seem to have had one), or K (as in The blower), or Paul Ricard (and perhaps names from Grasse or César Birotteau*), or Dun Karm Psaila (or forgotten but recorded créés of the Maltese order du fil des années), or Pangur Bán, or (to confuse) Sarah, Monika, even Lucy, Emma, to all of whom, each time wholly and anew, he submits (disciplines, binds) his silverpoint hand.”

[* about which I learned from Constance Debré’s new excerpt in Harper’s: “Little bottles of neon-yellow liquid, the scent of pastis. Paregoric elixir, or tincture of opium, it sounds like something out of César Birotteau. You can buy it over the counter. The instructions say it’s to be used to soothe stomachache. All the junkies take it when they need a fix. Burroughs writes about it, and even Joyce in Ulysses. Over the counter, at the end of the Seventies, beginning of the Eighties, that means even kids can buy it.”]

From Hantaï, the axiom that restraint is the means by which the sense and real presence of “everything” is attained; from Pontormo, beauty; from Pound, a technique (what it is to find details and to build them up--to be a fabbro, which the rest hereabove are par excellence); from Matisse, the ideal of success-as-a-painting; from Mondrian, the long beginning of the conjugation through the variables and axes which bear upon the working at this ideal; from Balthus, the posture in which all of this can be pursued (absolute deference, to the craft and to elect masters, deference absolute, even unto religion); from Baer and Rapson, style (from the former, what sorts of details are proper to my technique; from the latter, what sorts of aggregate effect are proper).

I am not saying something about Balthus, about whom nothing can be said (only painted, in a gesture with all the deference of his own copies of Masaccio and Piero); rather, about something written about Balthus (and Nabokov), in Salmagundi, a college magazine in which I also read a review of the Picabia show which I saw on Wednesday.

Jeffrey Meyers quotes Balthus: “I have a greater need for a château than a laborer for a loaf of bread.”

You can read this as post-facto of his usurping of a title; but, actually, the laborer in the

sentence is himself, too: Here he self-portrays in a painter's smock, the most explicitly workmanlike attribute available to the painter. (Is this spurious? I've never seen it.)

I find it an unlikely coincidence that his two chosen refuges were each so sonorous: Château de Chassy, Castello di Montecalvello.

In the drawings of Pontormo the latest phenomenon to hold my attention is a pair of drawings which seem in some way to plot a new polar axis which holds the entirety of the corpus in its orbit. U6660 is one, U6613 the other.

Others--the Corsini "Sketch for the Madonna and Saints of San Michele Visdomini" (fig. 14 in Clapp), for example--fall somewhere along or very near to this axis.

What is the matter here is a way in which Pontormo seems to decide to inject an alien element--which would be easier to call "geometric" if Euclid had begun from sweeping and tensile curves rather than from lines and their angles. The thought has, perhaps, something to do with an analogous decision imputed to Pontormo by Vasari, Hauser, Clapp, etc., to direct his attention to Dürer or more generally the Ultramontanes, but the element I am talking about does not correspond neatly to the influence of some other artist or artists. It is like he goes in these drawings to some other realm of pure forms, and returns to his other drawings changed, newly enlivened, or animated now by some entirely other life. This is the thought I have come to after first supposing--falsely, I now believe--that these drawings revealed some preparatory stage,

executed (perhaps mentally, perhaps on auxiliary sheets now lost) even if not visible, as a stepping point on the way to all the other drawings we see.

An overwhelming impression, uniting in one panel the force of the “little garden of paradise” by an “upper Rhenish master ca. 1410/20,” the hortus conclusus with which I was enamored on 28 May 2024,* and something (that aura of carpentry I mentioned) of that of Pontormo’s Certosa frescoes. Baxandall’s Limewood Sculptors led me indirectly to this Wurzach Altarpiece, as I was trying to find the alabaster work of this painter, this upper Rhenish (my recollection is no coincidence) Michelangelo, Hans Meltscher.

[*

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I can take a cue from the knot which precipitates Patrick Amstutz’s “The Christian Bain de diane” (an essay on Klossowski’s book, most useful as exemplary of the staggering array of sensitizations latent in the premise of an erudition like Klossowski’s):

“Quinsat emphasizes the "series of "tableaux' that glazes Le Bain de Diane" in accordance with a "circular" descriptive movement, he says, "from vision to commentary, attributed to the deferral without end of signs, and which feeds the entire work of Pierre Klossowski" [95]. And if he borrows the term "exegesis" from Foucault to describe the genre of the work, he immediately associates it with that of "narrative." A quarter of a century earlier, a commentary in the new Nouvelle revue française had already underlined the "disconcerting" character of Klossowski's book, by accentuating not only the strangeness of its thematic, but also the difficulties posed by the uncertainty of its generic belonging (which is echoed by the absent mention of a paratext): the critic, hesitating, suggested somewhat confusedly a typological kinship with philosophical commentary, theological scholasticism, prose poetry, series of paintings, historical narrative and

even the analysis of myths [Amer 144].”

From later in the same essay, this is an indispensable locating-citation for one interested in “space itself” as I am:
“Here, the goddess of a thousand epicleses also pulls back her bow under a Christian sky. In "Diana, too, divinity is to be considered in its height and its depth, its breadth and its length" and one "must always satisfy these four dimensions: space" being nothing "other than the spirit of its four movements" [BD2 201, as the narrator reminds us, following Saint Paul (Epistula beati Pauli apostoli ad Ephesios 3: 18, Vulgate: "ut possitis conprehendere cum omnibus sanctis, quae sit latitudo, et longitudo, et sublimitas, et profundum").”

29 June 2025

While thinking of Ovid’s Amores via Pearce “Bird Song” (which I still love, love):

Herculaneum, putti and lyre

Draws out something deep inside Pontormo’s Poggio lunette, and also gives me more walls to try to dig through, alongside Vermeer’s, Balthus’s, Hammershøi’s

---

I thought again today, while reminiscing about the Russian food which Alex ordered for the Finnish movie (the fish reminded me of nothing so much as the herring I had on the street in Amsterdam), and thence to the reputed brain-bolstering powers of (tinned? whole?) fish and related trappings (Korres Oceanic Amber, Orto Parisi Viride, extremely dense espresso, pickled things and olives for martinis, Karelias gold case cigarettes, Latronico’s Perfezione, as gathered

by a London aesthetics collector), of Pound's "Study in Aesthetics":

The very small children in patched clothing,
Being smitten with an unusual wisdom,
Stopped in their play as she passed them
And cried up from their cobbles:
Guarda! Ahi, guarda! ch'ebe'a!
(Look!, oh look!, that's beautiful!)
But three years after this
I heard the young Dante, whose last name I do not know --
For there are, in Sirmione, twenty-eight young Dantes and thirty-four Catulli;
And there had been a great catch of sardines,
And his elders
Were packing them in the great wooden boxes
For the market in Brescia, and he
Leapt about, snatching at the bright fish
And getting in both of their ways;
And in vain they commanded him to sta fermo!
And when they would not let him arrange
The fish in the boxes
He stroked those which were already arranged,
Murmuring for his own satisfaction
This identical phrase:
Ch'ebe'a.
And at this I was mildly abashed.

I repeat, two images which are, unto themselves, paintings: The swan-transfiguration-vision in Kleist's Marquise of O…; and the lord of love bearing the body of Beatrice. I only feel the need to locate the former, as I've located the latter so often recently. From "24_08":

"Finally, there is this "basis of emotions and gestures that have an extraordinary aesthetic power," which I read as pointing most especially to the count's tale of the swan, and of course as well to the Marquise's own flawless saintliness. Wanting to take a closer look at the actual mechanics of the the climactic moment of forgiveness, I paste the translation of Kleist's own version of this final exchange. I cannot now make full sense of it, but here are my best leads: First, that the count's telling of his dream (the count's narrative, his imaginative thinking, his faculty of allegory, his employment of narrative, his primordial and exemplary exercise of the Baudelaire comparison-abstraction step, his atomic-molecular being-an-artist, being-one-in-thought, his (thrown-)projection) is primarily significant in that it causes the Marquise to see him for the first time as a person; Second, that the count is not forgivable so long as he is read by the

Marquise as an angel (because a crime-committing angel is a devil) (the text is quite specific on this reading so far), which means, then, that true radical love, true heroic forgiveness which can never be expected of humans (to expect what is offered in the story of humans is to misread the film in the worst way, i.e. as a justification of the crime which launches it--we must instead read it as the most aspirational and sublime account of what a human can be capable of, a moving depiction of a true saint, the Marquise), requires, first of all, that its object be seen as a human person (in the deepest sense, indeed in every sense). True love cannot have as its object an angel, and this is indispensable from the fullest beauty of its vision. Here, then, is the ending: ___. Having looked for the narration of the working of memory and of the symbolic-bodily experience of phenomena, there at the end in Kleist's text, it was not to be found. It was Rohmer who deconstructed the count's narrative from the dinner episode and placed its crucial pivot at the end of the story. Here is Kleist's version of the story, then: "... how during his illness she had been constantly present to him, sitting at his bedside; how in the feverish delirium brought on by his wound he had kept confusing his visions of her with the sight of a swan, which, as a boy, he had watched on his uncle's estate; that he had been particularly moved by one memory, of an occasion on which he had once thrown some mud at this swan, whereupon it had silently dived under the surface and re-emerged, washed clean by the water; that she had always seemed to be swimming about on a fiery surface and that he had called out to her 'Tinka!', which had been the swan's name, but that he had not been able to lure her towards him. For she had preferred merely to glide about, arching her neck and thrusting out her breast." But it is Rohmer's intervention, then, which makes clear as crystalline light the meaning hidden herein."

The phrase "aesthetics of the fragment" floated into my head; I was taken by the sheer multitude that can go under its sign: Sappho (incl. Kenner's exemplary essay on what can be done with fragments like hers, in The Pound Era), Twombly, Rilke, let alone Nancy ("the fragmentary demand"), all this and what really seems to be the primary substance attached to this oft-landed-upon phrase is Schlegel, Coleridge, &c.

30 June 2025

From Jean-Luc Nancy, Sexistence, 33-34: "For sex desires to be said. It desires itself said, named, designated. And yet, it cannot become said except by fiction because its point is found — bursts — outside of language and outside of bodies. It wishes to be figured, to take figure there where it's without figure. There, it must be said, where figure is abolished to the point of repulsing itself, even as it is equated with the face or the whole body. / Baubo exposing herself to Demeter opens her vulva up so high it becomes her chin. An African phallus bears a face on its shat where the glans separates. Courbet's Origin of the World, deprived of a face, looks at us with

the very thin pink slit between the lips of the vulva. / This infiguration forms fiction. It gazes at us; it envisages us and stares at us as the invention of itself. It speaks and pronounces: "I am not a woman, I am a world." Just as a voice intones to Flaubert's Saint Anthony. / We must imagine an ithyphallic figure that would pronounce: "I am not a man, I am a world." But Picasso said that the erect, virile member is as difficult to represent as the sun [Indeed, I interject, I can hardly think of any authentic examples this side of ancient Greece, and what little there is is always qualified, glancing: Baselitz's Die große Nacht im Eimer, for example]: his only attempt yielded just a funny little drawing. / Erection, unto itself, verges on the grotesque as in Rimbaud's such joyous and harsh verses: "Ithyphallic and solderish / Their jeerings have depraved it!"”

Besides locating this section, containing in miniature much of the thrust of the book and also locating glimmering gems of images (for whatever, precisely, these are worth in a dynamic as salamander-slippery, as blinding-gagging, as this), it is worth noting that the more I read the more I find myself able to simply equate my own positions with those of Nancy.

At a glancing angle to this, I insist: The taking up of every fil lumineux at the end of which I can position myself, and the concerting of all my faculties therewith, and their amounting each time to a puttiphallic repetition: This is it, for me, right now. This is all I can do.

From Eugenio Montale, “Mediterraneo,” in The bones of cuttlefish, 63-64. (Not all line breaks preserved.)

“We do not know how we will emerge tomorrow, obscure or joyous;
perhaps our path
will lead us to untrod clearings
where the water of youth murmurs eternally;
or it might be perhaps a descent to the bottomless valley
into the darkness, the recollection of morning lost.
Foreign lands may yet welcome us: we will lose
the memory of the sun, the dinning of our rhyme will fall away from our minds.
Oh how the fable in which our life finds meaning, abruptly
will change into a gloomy story that cannot be retold!
Still of one thing you assure us,
father, and this is: that a little of your gift has passed for ever into the syllables
That we, buzzing bees, take with us.
We will travel far and we will preserve an echo
of your voice, as the grey grass
in the shadowy courtyard, among the houses,
remembers the sun.
And one day these words, without clamour,
which we nurtured
with fatigue and silences,

will speak to a fraternal heart
savouring of Greek salt.”

1 July 2025

Reread Buchloh’s Artforum review of Richard Leeman’s Cy Twombly monograph today, twice. Somehow I can’t help but try to hold Twombly in my head within some kind of auxiliary circuit that also includes Ryman and Rapson, off to the side, or down here below, my twin stellae (not aligned, but in relation; the problematization of the alignment of a pair of stars--they always are, they always aren’t--is an old favorite joke of mine), Pontormo and Hantaï.

These bits wriggle into prominence, this time:

Whether it’s “dubious” to strike a relation to the past in Twombly’s key when all the Italians, for example, were painting only the barest of worlds, completely busted, blown-out, dry as hell: “Twombly emerges, as we have long had reason to assume he would, as an immensely learned and very traditional artist, whose choice of a secondary European identity is perfectly plausible. His road to Rome reverberates with the pilgrimages of generations of artists throughout the nineteenth century, from the German Nazarenes to the English Pre-Raphaelites, and his motivations seem to have been similar to theirs: to rediscover, if not to redeem, the remnants of a transhistorical foundation of culture, situated at the intersection of Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman traditions. If, at the height of Beat culture, Twombly's Italian road trip must have appeared a rather eccentric project, it now seems perfectly comprehensible as an act of refusal, a desperate attempt to escape the rise of a monolithic American postwar consumer culture by searching out islands of preindustrial civilization. Twombly moves in reverse, from the brutish primitivity of a rapidly advancing technoindustrial mass culture to the sacred ruins of the Greco-Roman Empire. Yet even with the hindsight of fifty years, it seems inexplicable that this fiction of the classical European foundations of culture would not have become dubious in the aftermath of Italian Fascism and the Holocaust.”

“... when Leeman's more complex description of Twombly's "essential" strategy of painting glyphs as hybrids of icon and logos concludes in a perfectly compelling diagnosis of the anal erotic components of painting in general and of Twombly's work in particular.”

Here Twombly reads as though he could not have failed to come to me as luminously as did Hantaï. And why didn’t he? Because I was never able to value his paintings as paintings, not even at the Getty, not even when I delighted in the arcadia of the poetic cloud they plotted; because I was never able to find them beautiful, because they seemed to delight in a refusal that I recognize also in the work of a Picabia, a “gotcha” gesture--almost a provocation, “I dare you to find this beautiful, even this”--that always smacked far too context-dependent to me, not worth recuperating, an effect strictly determined by its given scene. How now? What changed? “... diverse strands of psychoanalytic theory from Freud and Jung to Lacan, and Leeman excels at deploying structural-linguistic and semiological models in his discussion of Twombly's writerly painting. After all, the white grounds of Twombly's paintings are the grounds of an emerging scripture that evacuates painting from its seemingly ontological entwinement with natural and mythical forms of depiction. And this historical process of painting's irreversible tendency

toward textuality, a process that leads from Twombly to Robert Ryman, and from Ryman to Lawrence Weiner, …"
"if the proto-Conceptual tendency toward textuality (as is the case with Johns) is indeed, as we would agree with the author, one of the most important aspects of Twombly's work, the mere memory of Mallarme, moving as it may be, will not suffice: We would still have to clarify not only whether Twombly repositioned painting in the 1960s in a manner comparable to the way that Mallarme repositioned poetry in the 1880s, but whether the redefinition of painting as writing would be comparable to the radicality of Mallarme's interventions in poetic textuality."
[Are these questions pursued anywhere, by Buchloh or whoever else?]
[And again, Mr Buchloh, is there an answer to these questions elsewhere, that you know of but do not mention?] "understanding Twombly's place in the formation of a post-Greenbergian aesthetic that sprang from the fusion of the legacies of Marcel Duchamp and John Cage (with Rauschenberg and Johns, if not Ellsworth Kelly, as his immediate peers). After all, Twombly was responding as critically to Pollock's presumed expressivity as Johns's painted epistemological skepticism was, or as Manzoni's deconstruction of painting was. Yet we will never learn from Leeman's study what, if anything, Twombly's mark-making shares with Johns's molecular deposits of encaustic paint or with Rauschenberg's chemically induced dye-transfer imagery, let alone with Manzoni's Achrome paintings."
Leeman seems to argue--for the most part splendidly and convincingly--that the significance of Twombly's work derives from its singularity, its extraordinary refinement, and from the extreme differentiation of its subjectivity. And yet these very qualities are, to Leeman's thinking, precisely what align it in some kind of transhistorical continuity or elective affinity with nineteenth-century concepts of artistic subjectivity originating in Romanticism, Neoclassicism, and Symbolism.
It may be that "scripture," in the sense here, activates what I've lately taken to calling the fil lumineux; but Buchloh's sense here is rather vague; maybe if I read Barthes's two essays on Twombly the term will become more specific; anyway, one must turn to all of the valences of scripture in Hantaï, of which E.R. was only a notionally-initiatory knot (certainly not a beginning, anyway), if one wants to realize (make real) what it is (can be) to me. "The price we pay for that extrapolation into the spheres of transhistorical aesthetic experience is, of course, the loss of what was once the almost aggressive specificity of Twombly's work in the context of New York School painting. Leeman's account effaces Twombly's interventionist urgency of the late '50s, which challenged Pollock's mythical power of cultic and somatic primacy by shifting from gesture to scripture and by dislodging belated American automatisms with a proto-Lacanian conception of the textuality of the unconscious [this last phrase is of great interest to me; among other things, identifying what might be "a proto-Lacanian concept" as "that the unconscious is textual" resonates in an affirmative way with much of what I think about the person (one might add the qualification that my own thought is after Lacan by way of being after Nancy, and is, besides this, also after a Catholic tradition whose most specification-needing threads I hope to work towards better names for by means of Mounier's journal Esprit]."
Immediately following the above, but raising within it the question w/r/t which I still am somewhat insecure vis à vis my own painting (does the "new start" idea of re-Symbolism, sorely needed though it may be, amount to anything new after all? Is there a particular, and expired, "end of painting" drama latent in or specifically common to painters (the list above, say: Ryman and Rapson with Twombly, not to mention Hantaï) I want to draw life from--life which, because

of said expiration, will not transfer, will not be enlivened by my fil lumineux?): “And, equally urgent, by transforming painting itself into an allegorical incantation, Twombly mourned both the loss of a disappearing classical world of mythical experience and, ultimately, the loss of painting itself.”

2 July 2025

The idea last night, in my mind as a fixed system, that my writing (what I have called my “oscillatory work”) is to be receptacle for every expressive or inscriptive impulse I have, like a scapegoat on which to deposit all that excrescent dross in order to clear a purity (a purity of impulse and thus a purity of content) for my painting. There is one, and then there is the other; there is one that there may be the other; only the latter is art, on spa town’s anti-expressionist terms.

“In my mind as a fixed system”: Immediately as this system-imaged concreted in my head, I was even more enticed by the prevision of setting up this model as (of course) untenable but nonetheless held (tenere) fixed as a model to be ever showably fallen away from, a horizon ever striven toward, the registration (precisely) of this falling-short being a true oscillatory organic unity encompassing both sides (kost-, the rib and shore root), its presentation (making-present), really, being the art-in-and-as-life supervention (simultaneous refutation and realization) of the more rigorous or even formalist fabbro-notion of art which I have often thought of as spa town’s core but which is really more like its skeleton.

And so: Formalize and rigorize this fil lumineux painting practice all the more, Twombly-dedicate each scriptural material datum, let painting itself (drawing after Pontormo, imitating each Vermeer / Balthus / Hammershøi wall, conjugating my variables as did Ryman and Rapson) be the habitus which encompasses performance but is at the same time more than it, performance whose ritual dimension realizes an element that is agnostic to spectation, completely independent of audience.

And, all at the same time, open the taps of “espresso cup,” the taps of Ludovic Nemo: Thinly veil that autofiction, deposit bare notes from bare life, and sublimate every desire. The jouissance of concretizing my very excrement, my living’s dross, and of making to proliferate images that virtually--but for that no less effectively--realize my every desire, attain my every allure.

And each side cannot help but inflect and sustain, contaminate and nourish, the other. Such is sexual reproduction.

I ate alone today in a café, Liu’s, which John sent me to after taking photos of me to practice with his new Hasselblad. I loved it, actually, eating alone. And the cold noodles were delicious, perfect, even.

I like -- to walk around and to think to myself that what I am doing reintroduces the figure into the space of free play that Twombly had emptied out for himself, that now there can be one more thing there, the figure, là où il n'y était qu'arabesque, his contour, that line picking up innumerable valences with every stretch and turn but only ever aggregating into iconic signs, never figures.

Bella hasn't really been talking to me for four days, or since Saturday actually, maybe Friday, at least five days, especially seemed to blame me for something unknown while Fennec was over on Saturday, this time I was confident I hadn't committed any laziness or carelessness with respect to watching the baby so when she became annoyed (out of stress at the responsibility? It would be understandable of course), as happens each time, I knew that I wasn't at fault; Sunday, we helped Daphne to move into her new apartment, it was extremely hot but I did what I could; two nights ago, Monday, Bella told me that the reason she hadn't really been talking to me was because she had been realizing that lately, more and more over time but especially lately, I have become a selfish person, who doesn't enjoy doing things for other people, and that when a couple weeks ago she told me I've been complaining too much lately (she acknowledges that since then I've complained less; I've tried to do so, and it has worked) it was actually this that she meant. I was so jarred that I didn't respond that night, it was late too, and Daph was over again last night so things were more or less normal, and she was gone all day today, we were more normal still when she came back, but then we addressed it, I told her how much it had affected me and that after all my introspection (I've thought of little else) I cannot agree with her. She could not point to things that were not easily explained by other factors (that I don't like talking on the phone, that things are no better when they're planned in advance, that she cannot assume that just because I hadn't done something in advance of her own early-leaning timeline that it would not have gotten done at all if it weren't for her, for example). Still she insists. Every time she levels a complaint or an accusation--and often I don't agree with it, and don't come around to agreeing with it any more than I began with--I always make the sacrifice of being the one to apologize, promise an intent, I bow my head, and I even mean it too, because I really am willing to make the sacrifice of will and right, whatever measure of my own will and right is in question, in order that life may return, time may resume. But this time I can't. It's just too big an accusation, too far from my perception of reality, too serious (whether I am a basically loving or basically good person, really) to permit the ritual folding of my own perspective that I've

become habitually willing to undertake.

4 July 2025

Who is to say but that I shall not, eventually, be able to interpellate into my current maniera of copiste such Events of memory (memora) as that their flash of light (momentary glow) extend all the way to the horizon.

What I mean is an effect just as that in Pound's Canto III. It strikes me that my stricter discipline of copiste, such as I practice it now, obsessed over nothing but the fil lumineux, has something real in common with what Pound did before he could write a Canto III: namely, Personae and Canzoni.

Not that I haven't said almost just this before: 1205.

But Pea's preface to Pound's translation of his Moscardino brings it back to me in just this light: "... something of the nature of his poetry, with its sudden interpolations of reminiscences, at times parenthetically incorporated in the rhythm of the song, at times abruptly detached from it."

The cover of my edition of Pea's Moscardino is a very fitting Modigliani. Equally apt was this painting for a volume of Montale, maybe it was Ossi di seppia:

It turns out to be Carlo Carrà in a manner I didn't know he had.

And yet another manner of Carrà could produce this, whose swimmers each in a world (in the proper sense) of their own evokes Calvino's story about the denuded swimmer:

9 July 2025

A certain idea or notion has been hovering around in my head recently, & I suppose for a long time. It is in the interlineaments between the phrases “plastic values,” “haptic values,” “optic values.”

On the truest but vaguest level, what I’m talking about is nothing other than what re-Symbolism holds to be the field proper to painting. I’ve called it things like “Boisian or Friedian sensitivity,” and “precisely the field of play in which Mondrian always worked,” etc.

I remember a phrase of Baxandall from Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy which made perfect sense to me at the time but which has since come to bug me because the use of the term “overeducated” belies a prejudice I find despicable; if there is grounding for this judgment of his in his particular leftism, for which I’ve always felt a deep admiration, perhaps my feelings need a reassessment. (I couldn’t re-locate the phrase in the book, but I found one which contains its two ingredients, Baxandall’s disdain for Berenson and for the use of such ambiguous terms as “tactile”: “Bernard Berenson--‘I never see them without the strongest stimulation of my tactile consciousness.’ But Landino has the advantage of talking about the pictures, in the painters’ terms, and not about himself” (122).)

It could also (somewhat absurdly, because analogies between the arts are to be approached with prohibitive caution, as each is a specific and, at the end of the day, incomparable medium) be named as the painterly equivalent of what Tatol is talking about in the sculpture of Jilaine Jones at 15 Orient: “Jones, however, makes a strong case for the viability of Fried's old muse, Anthony Caro. Planar, often oriented low to the ground, industrial and wiry but self-contained; she wears Caro's influence on her sleeve, but her command of the material is strong enough (and his followers are rare enough) that she comfortably makes a case for her own work. ... It's something about the point where the industrial sleekness of the steel collides with the rough tactility of plaster or concrete, and the way that collision goes beyond formal juxtaposition to become something dynamic and emotionally visceral, even existential. Without resorting to reference though, these are fresh, refined, formally polished, or, bluntly, the work of a technically accomplished sculptor.”

In the copyist there is a submission. It is in the hand of the copyist that this submission has its habitation. It is a gesture ritually enacted, a posture cultivated by firm practice. It is the negative space around which muscle memory conforms. This space tenses ever more closely to a specific shape, the specificity of which is beauty itself.

10 July 2025

Just that now I have a token ribbon of blood to hold alongside my long-running and effluvient streams of sweat and tears: A small wound, but a deep one, like a little ice cream scoop out of the tender inside of the joint of my thumb where nothing pads the little tendons and ligaments, in trying to remove a stubborn wood insert from angle-cut aluminum.

I was exceptionally dirty today, doused in sweat, I was Tuesday too, but also today smeared all over with a dark gray oiliness and sprinkled heavily with glittering aluminum dust (I made ninety cuts in the work day's last two hours). On Tuesday I sorted three hundred offcut bars by length, most of them at least a year old and covered thickly with dust; I sneezed all evening, and all of Wednesday too, despite sweating under a mask. After work on Tuesday Bella and I built Daphne's bed in her new apartment which is still brutally hot, though the air conditioning unit, a small machine attached by a duct to the window, is no longer broken.

Still I take some pride in my work, and when Max tells me at 4:50 p.m. to stop sorting the bars, tells me slowly, with mock sincerity, that I can clean up, that I don't have to keep working, I excuse myself by lying that it will drive me crazy to leave the task unfinished, when really I just find it good to work quickly and neatly and most of all perfectly, so that if I can finish a large task with good timing then I will, and it will bring me a very specific quality of satisfaction, specific and qualified a millionfold by my every passing and accumulated feeling about the work and the enterprise. Despite and because of everything, that quality is significant, and not just trivially significant (as everything is significant): it is what I choose to retain, or in any case, what persists. I record it two days later.

17 July 2025

Wrestling lately with the idea of liberty, freedom, in an artistic sense, in a French sense, in an American sense.

The freedom that, and it is almost paradoxical to say, was the structuring principle of Duchamp's entire life. It is not clear whether the Dadaists were ever tapped into the same; the only ones about which this can be confidently said are Jarry & co., the ones in whom Duchamp first recognized it, under whose care it was not codified.

"Artistic freedom."

Duchamp and Godard are the pivotal articulations of the idea that's really in question; almost any other statement of the ideal is mere stereotype; it requires the exemplary living of an entire œuvre; it requires, that is, a saint, and a terrible one, unholy even.

Eluard, quoted excessively at all significant points of Cronenberg's not-great Maps to the Stars which I watched just before attending Valentina Vaccarella's eponymous exhibition at the Gaylord (John said he didn't think it was very good either): "Sur ___, sur ___, [ad infinitum],

j’écris ton tom, [ad infinitum], Liberté.”

Walter Pearce’s dog named “Freedom,” and, from Grotjahn’s Instagram something in which I’m likewise surprised to find significance (even, and precisely, in the photographed painting):

And the surprise itself is germane, because the thing about freedom--particularly in the sense I’m getting at here, which is where freedom takes on a status either hazily close to or precisely as an absolute value (and how can freedom ever be anything but absolute?)--is that it may not leave room for beauty.

That’s the crux of it that I set out toward in gathering these spare referents: The reason it’s that I’ve been “wrestling” lately is that, since beauty is always my touchstone absolute, the unquestioned orientation of my devotion, and coinciding in beauty I’m sure of finding God, Love, desire, I’m ardent about their onement there, for all these reasons I don’t exactly know liberty’s place.

On a simple existentiell level, the only freedom I’ve ever really cared about (and this is not to make light of it; in fact, it is a primary passion of my life, a driving force unsurpassed by more than two or three others, which are for their part the devotions which define me) is freedom from work, which is to say, freedom to work, freedom to simply do the beautiful things with Bella (the so-called “small pleasures,” dolce far niente), freedom to paint just the paintings that paint themselves, freedom to father children and devote to them precisely no less attention to them than they can bear.

Freedom to work: Duchamp’s idea that it is useless to ever make the same work twice is quite relevant.

Freedom from work: The idea of the flâneur is quite relevant.

Freedom to work: It is complicated that the only way in which it may happen that I attain the freedom I seek is intricately bound up with the work itself.

A little footnote: It seems important that the only things I’ve made lately in which I really find a little thrill of aesthesis, saying to Theo only (undecidedly) half-ironically “Why is this more fun than painting,” are the little fuckings-up of my labor’s central recipe: The free variables exhilarated me, the adequacy of whatever result did too, precisely in relation to the inhabited (inculcated) rigor of the uniformity and the standards of perfection against which the sense of freedom played off.

Another little footnote, with which I should really have started: Besides Duchamp or Godard (and my existentiell analysis to which I don’t overascribe significance but which can’t be absent from any picture), the other defining component of all my own thoughts on the subject is the thrownness of thrown-projection: Personal freedom is never absolute, there is always a point from which it acts, there is always contingency (Mallarmé may, therefore, have been the first serious thinker in the strand of freedom that matters to me, definitively preceding the 20th-century saints--who may also count Picasso among their number--without their fully understanding how). And, because of the simple fact of always finding yourself with a from-where, any ideal of absolute freedom is a chimera, and any pursuit thereof is in some measure a

tragic hero's arc (Rimbaud being merely the most easily visible paragon, and all others with the same passion only ever seeming to avoid the same fate, which, even if it looks like the arcadian aging of Duchamp, Picasso, Godard, may in fact be nothing other than immolation).

So, because beauty and thrownness are firmly within any picture of mine, within the frame of my every thought of liberté, my efforts look how they do: re-Symbolism, a project humbly and sincerely tinkering towards beauty, drawing upon all the resources available (as Godard drew upon tradition, literature and Beethoven; as, too, Pound and Twombly drew upon tradition, each in their entirely individual way).

[Added in car on way to work:]

Adding onto the note I made this morning on freedom. I think there are really only two kinds of artists, or three if you count the ones who are not really artists, the ones who seek money, or more precisely the ones whose money-seeking is definitive of the forms they produce, definitive in place of any other search. But the two kinds of real artist are the ones who seek beauty, and the ones who seek freedom. I think. I think any other ideal one can pursue is just another name for one of these two. And therefore can only confuse. Poetry, for example, try though I have to find any different meaning for it, I think it's just a word for the copresence of beauty and freedom, or, more pessimistically, for a compromise between the two that does not, for that, disappoint the sense. Think of the forms that inspire the label poetic: They're the ones whose makers' freedom is acutely palpable, and which, at the same time, feel right and not simply chaotic or arbitrary.

I feel a sudden sense of clarity at this point in the tracing of this notion that I don't think I've really traced in these terms before. It seems newly clear to me how Love in my life shakes out the way it does--newly clear, that is, why I feel the particular pressures and tensions that I feel in pursuit of the things which I really care about. Since real freedom can only ever be absolute, since its face can therefore only ever be bare life, simply living (what I called dolce far niente with one's beloved, which is also the uncompromisable privilege to have the enormous dispensable time that real fatherhood and motherhood require as a simple precondition to attainment of such freedom), it's pulled in two directions, because, on the one hand, nothing else would truly be Love for the beloved, for the children; and on the other hand, its pursuit can get in the way of what looks like love in the short term. Maybe this is an enormous rationalization-excuse, but, I think, at its bottom, this is why Bella called me selfish last week.

As a footnote to the above, and having to do with the way I see the opening of one's eyes to beauty as the only workable political liberation, that is, art as redemptive of the rather limited success of any socialism this side of utopia, (I've lost my sentence, but what I was saying is that) regarding the other kind of love, universal brotherly or neighborly love, to which all are called, it is, in fact, within reach that all may taste such freedom, but it necessitates a very serious retraction of material desires, a moving of the goalposts from conventionally-imagined luxe to consummately aestheticized dolce far niente, which is crucially not without its own excesses, but whose excesses don't have to come at any substantial social cost, because they can be all but restricted to the plane of aesthetics, whose "capital" is attention (Capital there is under heavy quotes because it does not really work as capital notionally works: It's not infinitely exchangeable).

Here is the reason why Godard's Anna Karina films are among the most important works of art I've ever met. Despite his handicaps, which include an aestheticized Hollywood misogyny that Godard deeply internalized, and an ultimate acceptability of divorce that might be local to his Protestantism, and the fact that infidelity was far from unthinkable (which might be local to his

Frenchness, such as it was for this Swiss citizen), despite these handicaps, his love--that is, his simultaneous devotion to Karina and to his medium, cinema--were pursued beautifully, aristocratically, tragically and comically, purely, but most of all beautifully. And the films Une femme est une femme, Vivre sa vie, Une femme mariée, and Bande à part are the very inscription of these two intersecting (but uncompromising!) pursuits, Freedom and Love: art and desire in a dance whose points of tension are so acute and so authentically personal that they redeem the handicaps that I named and even make those handicaps read as allegorically representative of any such handicap that no such pursuit can be free from try though anyone might to be always on the lookout for them and always purging them from the conscience.

13 July 2025

[In car on way to Byzantine mass; need to fix transcription errors:]

Thinking a lot about Gro John in light of the way that my wall paintings with the blank wall where I vary the painting of them as much as I want while keeping the motif thinking about how they could conceivably look very similar to the way that Grouchan just sources colors and paint application from various paintings with citation in the title and also about how I am possibly interested in making bronze casts like those Etruscan statues cause I like their posture so much and I like totemic figure shapes like the Venoit to palm tree stump at the DMA, but mostly I like the tradition of bronze lost wax, the Etruscan guys and the proto geometric horse, which I think is at the Met from Jody's class, all these in very close relation to the sculptures, which at least began as part of the masks series, but the ones with the branches that I've talked about before and would like to talk about more as revealing in all its glory, the musical structure that generates the elaboration of all of Grochon's work phylogenetic, baroque, etc combinatorial all this to come around to saying what I've said before, which is that the inherent difference is that degenerative engine of Grrojon's work were generates not the forms, but the energy to prolong the practice is I still think if Frison regarding authorship, which is why he was the perfect artist for Laura Hopwein's show the forever now, which was about really about authorship about the contemporary status of newness and art, her position being basically that the interesting artists painting now are not worried that their techniques and material should be new. They're thriving in a mode of appropriation or were at that time. I also want to bring into this context, the sputhmaker's press release note on Algiero Boet which also said something about how his work has always generated from either a specific polarity or always generated from some polarity or other any case this is the spirit in which I identify a core, knot or hang up about authorship as what continues to generate Gron's work again, not the specific forms, but the continuation of his practice, whereas for me as I've said before, it's more a matter of beauty of revealing beauty. And I think that's still the case, even as freedom becomes perhaps temporarily an idea very important to me as a quality that needs to be made palpable with the beauty revealed through finding with an athletically perceptive eye and showing by elaborative difference repetitional means, and a

fiation, thees of practice of artistic discipleship, even as freedom becomes an essential force sensitized by all the rigor that comes from elsewhere in the conceptual cuisine, the fundamental driving force is still a pursuit of beauty Bohemian devotion to one or more of the arts as it was always said poetry going along with painting for me still as it always comes and perhaps I say again, bronze A separate footnote. It would be nice to request permission from Professor Landy to print copies of his essay on the Sonate Allergorique d to be legible in the room where our displayed my wall painings, many of them perhaps if this is acceptable bearing the title tableau algorith to remember The question is whether seeking to be preposterously gorgeous preposterously citational and thereby humorous whether by these means, which are Grot Johnny in to the point of having been sourced from words he made to be written Whether these means come off as conducive to my desired effect

14 July 2025

I want to rework / rewrite / repurpose this segment of Kojève's Introduction to the Reading of Hegel so that, instead of being oriented all toward Jena and the table, the end of all this analysis is love, in a specific dyadic mutual subordination which can then be understood as molecular (but, crucially, each time anew, never mechanically repeatable or interchangeable):

"To explain the fact of the Battle of Jena, the fact of the History that that battle completes, one must therefore posit a fourth and last irreducible premise in the Phenomenology. One must suppose that the Fight ends in such a way that both adversaries remain alive. Now, if this is to occur, one must suppose that one of the adversaries gives in to the other and submits to him, recognizing him without being recognized by him. One must suppose that the Fight ends in the victory of the one who is ready to go all the way over the one who faced with death-does not manage to raise himself above his biological instinct of preservation (identity). To use Hegel's terminology, one must suppose that there is a victor who becomes the Master of the vanquished; or, if one prefers, a vanquished who becomes the Slave of the victor. The existence of a difference between Master and Slave or, more exactly, the possibility of a difference between future Master and future Slave is the fourth and last premise of the Phenomenology.

The vanquished has subordinated his human desire for Recognition to the biological desire to preserve his life: this is what determines and reveals to him and to the victor-his inferiority. The victor has risked his life for a nonvital end: and this is what determines and reveals-to him and to the vanquished-his superiority over biological life and, consequently, over the vanquished. Thus, the difference between Master and Slave is realized in the existence of the victor and of the vanquished, and it is recognized by both of them.

The Master's superiority over Nature, founded on the risk of his life in the Fight for prestige, is realized by the fact of the Slave's Work. This Work is placed between the Master and Nature. The Slave transforms the given conditions of existence so as to make them conform to the Master's demands. Nature, transformed by the Slave's Work, serves the Master, without his needing to serve it in turn. The enslaving side of the interaction with Nature falls to the lot of the Slave: by enslaving the Slave and forcing him to work, the Master enslaves Nature and thus realizes his

freedom in Nature. Thus the Master's existence can remain exclusively war-like: he fights, but does not work. As for the Slave, his existence is reduced to Work (Arbeit) which he executes in the Master's Service (Dienst). He works, but does not fight. And according to Hegel, only action carried out in another's service is Work (Arbeit) in the proper sense of the word: an essentially human and humanizing action. The being that acts to satisfy its own instincts, which-as such-are always natural, does not rise above Nature: it remains a natural being, an animal. But by acting to satisfy an instinct that is not my own, I am acting in relation to what is not—for me-instinct. I am acting in relation to an idea, a nonbiological end. And it is this transformation of Nature in relation to a nonmaterial idea that is Work in the proper sense of the word: Work that creates a nonnatural, technical, humanized World adapted to the human Desire of a being that has demonstrated and realized its superiority to Nature by risking its life for the nonbiological end of Recognition. And it is only this Work at could finally produce the table on which Hegel wrote his Phenomenology and which was a part of the content of the I that analyzed in answering his question, "What am I?" Generally speaking, by accepting the four premises mentioned above, namely: above, namely: (1) the existence of the revelation of given Being by Speech, (2) the existence of a Desire engendering an Action that negates, transforms, given Being, (3) the existence of several Desires, which can desire one another mutually, and (4) the existence of a possibility of difference between the Desires of (future) Masters and the Desires of (future) Slaves-by accepting these four premises, we understand the possibility of a historical process, of a History, which is, in its totality, the history of the Fights and the Work that finally ended in the wars of Napoleon and the table on which Hegel wrote the Phenomenology in order to understand both those wars and that table. Inversely, in order to explain the possibility of the Phenomenology, which is written on a table and which explains the wars of Napoleon, we must suppose the four premises mentioned."" (41-43).

This undertaking would be true to my recent impulse to work out a somewhat deep picture of the relation between love and freedom, esp. with art in the analysis's picture too.* Since a fixation on freedom alone, looking somewhat like the analysis above without my proposed extension / repetition-in-difference, feels like the animating interest in—say—the oeuvre of Mark Grotjahn and the post-Karina work of Godard (maybe). Reconstituting the Kojève-Hegelian system (making a new system which, then, is not the original at all) with a definitive orientation around love, I think, would be a good (in that it is very big) picture of the territory my life and work (should) inhabit.

[* Just to flag that I don't yet know how Hegel's own Aesthétique, explicit interest of Godard, has its own part to play here.]

In this (long) section of SEP on Hegel's aesthetics, I find exactly what I hoped to find in the above pointer to Hegel's ideas on (something like) "relation freedom to beauty" (unfortunately this section of the essay is devoid of citation): "Art, for Hegel, also gives expression to spirit's understanding of itself. It differs from philosophy and religion, however, by expressing spirit's self-understanding not in pure concepts, or in the images of faith, but in and through objects that have been specifically made for this purpose by human beings. Such objects-conjured out of stone, wood, color, sound or words— render the freedom of spirit visible or audible to an audience. In Hegel's view, this sensuous expression of free spirit constitutes beauty. The purpose of art, for Hegel, is thus the creation of beautiful objects in which the true character of freedom is

given sensuous expression.
The principal aim of art is not, therefore, to imitate nature, to decorate our surroundings, to prompt us to engage in moral or political action, or to shock us out of our complacency. It is to allow us to contemplate and enjoy created images of our own spiritual freedom-images that are beautiful precisely because they give expression to our freedom. Art's purpose, in other words, is to enable us to bring to mind the truth about ourselves, and so to become aware of who we truly are. Art is there not just for art's sake, but for beauty's sake, that is, for the sake of a distinctively sensuous form of human self-expression and self-understanding. Hegel's close association of art with beauty and freedom shows his clear indebtedness to Kant and Schiller. Kant also maintained that our experience of beauty is an experience of freedom. He argued, however, that beauty is not itself an objective property of things. When we judge that a natural object or a work of art is beautiful, on Kant's view, we are indeed making a judgment about an object, but we are asserting that the object has a certain effect on us (and that it should have the same effect on all who view it). The effect produced by the "beautiful" object is to set our understanding and imagination in "free play" with one another, and it is the pleasure generated by this free play that leads us to judge the object to be beautiful (Kant, 98,
102-3).
In contrast to Kant, Schiller understands beauty to be a property of the object itself. It is the property, possessed by both living beings and works of art, of appearing to be free when in fact they are not. As Schiller puts it in the "Kallias" letters, beauty is "freedom in appearance, autonomy in appearance (Schiller, 151). Schiller insists that freedom itself is something "noumenal" (to use Kant's terminology) and so can never actually manifest itself in the realm of [...] or embodied in, the world of space and time. In the case of beautiful objects, therefore whether they are the products of nature or human imagination-"it is all that matters [...] that the object appears as free, not that it really is so" (Schiller, 151).
Hegel agrees with Schiller (against Kant) that beauty is an objective property of things. In his view, however, beauty is the direct sensuous manifestation of freedom, not merely the appearance or imitation of freedom. It shows us what freedom actually looks like and sounds like when it gives itself sensuous expression (albeit with varying degrees of idealization). Since true beauty is the direct sensuous expression of the freedom of spirit, it must be produced by free spirit for free spirit, and so cannot be a mere product of nature. Nature is capable of a formal beauty, and life is capable of what Hegel calls
"sensuous" beauty (PK, 197), but true beauty is found only in works of art that are freely created by human beings to bring before our minds what it is to be free spirit.
Beauty, for Hegel, has certain formal qualities: it is the unity or harmony of different elements in which these elements are not just arranged in a regular, symmetrical pattern but are unified organically. Hegel gives an example of genuinely beautiful form in his discussion of Greek sculpture: the famous Greek profile is beautiful, we are told, because the forehead and the nose flow seamlessly into one another, in contrast to the Roman profile in which there is a much sharper angle between the forehead and nose (Aesthetics, 2: 727-30).
Beauty, however, is not just a matter of form; it is also a matter of content. This is one of Hegel's most controversial ideas, and is one that sets him at odds with those modern artists and art-theorists who insist that art can embrace any content we like and, indeed, can dispense with content altogether. As we have seen, the content that Hegel claims is central and indispensable to genuine beauty (and therefore genuine art) is the freedom and richness of spirit. To put it another

way, that content is the Idea, or absolute reason, as self-knowing spirit. Since the Idea is pictured in religion as "God," the content of truly beautiful art is in one respect the divine. Yet, as we have seen above, Hegel argues that the Idea (or "God") comes to consciousness of itself only in and through finite human beings. The content of beautiful art must thus be the divine in human form or the divine within humanity itself (as well as purely human freedom).
Hegel recognizes that art can portray animals, plants and inorganic nature, but he sees it as art's principal task to present divine and human freedom. In both cases, the focus of attention is on the human figure in particular. This is because, in Hegel's view, the most appropriate sensuous incarnation of reason and the clearest visible expression of spirit is the human form.
Colors and sounds by themselves can certainly communicate a mood, but only the human form actually embodies spirit and reason. Truly beautiful art thus shows us sculpted, painted or poetic images of Greek gods or of Jesus Christ— that is, the divine in human form—or it shows us images of free human life itself. [5.] Art and Idealization Art, for Hegel, is essentially figurative. This is not because it seeks to imitate nature, but because its purpose is to express and embody free spirit and this is achieved most adequately through images of human beings. (We will consider the exceptions to this architecture and music—below.) More specifically, art's role is to bring to mind truths about ourselves and our freedom that we often lose sight of in our everyday activity. Its role is to show us (or remind us of) the true character of freedom. Art fulfills this role by showing us the freedom of spirit in its purest form without the contingencies of everyday life. That is to say, art at its best presents us not with the all too familiar dependencies and drudgery of daily existence, but with the ideal of freedom (see Aesthetics, 1: 155-6). This ideal of human (and divine) freedom constitutes true beauty … .”

This point (From SEP on Hegel’s aesthetics) is probably of great interest to Godard, working from the problematization of the working of the camera as the ultimate imitator of nature: “... what true art is meant to do: namely, give sensuous expression to free spirit and thereby create works of beauty. Hegel does not prescribe strict rules for the production of beauty; but he does set out broad criteria that truly beautiful art must meet, and he is critical of work that claims to be "art" but that fails to meet these criteria. Hegel's critique of certain developments in post-Reformation art-such as the aspiration to do no more than imitate nature - is thus based, not on contingent personal preferences, but on his philosophical understanding of the true nature and purpose of art.”

It is fun to read Grotjahn into this; Grotjahn sensitizes and then transcends the formal and the static, by my account; also, this provides a template for where to productively go from my Klossowskian starting point of free play of doubling (Hardy Hill and formalization), why it is worth instantiating (sensitizing) that rigor, & what is the payoff of putting it in free play (Hegel attests that the freedom realized by the human spirit within those formal lines is in fact more than arbitrary, has a value greater than the aleatory: it is not just a relapse into the contingent. (But does this recuperate an essentially Romantic valorization of expression, which I cannot admit?))
“The realm of the sensuous is the realm of individual things in space and time. Freedom is given sensuous expression, therefore, when it is embodied in an individual who stands alone in his or her "self-enjoyment, repose, and bliss [Seligkeit]" (Aesthetics, 1: 179). Such an individual must

not be abstract and formal (as, for example, in the early Greek Geometric style), nor should he be static and rigid (as in much ancient Egyptian sculpture), but his body and posture should be visibly animated by freedom and life, without, however, sacrificing the stillness and serenity that belongs to ideal self-containment. Such ideal beauty, Hegel claims, is found above all in fifth- and fourth-century Greek sculptures of the gods, such as the Dresden Zeus (a cast of which Hegel saw in the early 1820s) or Praxiteles' Cnidian Aphrodite (see PKA, 143 and Houlgate 2007, 58).”

16 July 2025

I cannot account, in my memory, for these Pontormo paintings:

If I get to request drawings for the Getty Center Drawings Department Study Room (form at this link), these are the drawings I would choose:

Pontormo 90.GA.22

Reclining Youth https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103R48

Pontormo 90.GB.34
Seated Figure (recto); Reclining Figure (verso)
https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103R4C

Pontormo 87.GB.95
Study of a Nude Boy, Partial Figure Study (recto); Study of a Seated Man (verso)
https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103R1P

Pontormo 83.GG.379
Saint Francis (recto); Dead Christ (verso)
https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103QWS

Da Vinci 84.GA.647
Caricature of a Man with Bushy Hair
https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103QXS

Da Vinci 86.GG.725
Studies for the Christ Child with a Lamb (recto); Head of an Old Man, and Studies of Machinery (verso)
https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103QS0

Michelangelo 2017.78
Study of a Mourning Woman
https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103QTY

Michelangelo 93.GB.51
The Holy Family with the Infant Saint John the Baptist (recto); Amorous Putti at Play; Head of a Bird (verso)
https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103R7E

Ensor 89.GD.42
Christ's Entry into Jerusalem (recto); Christ Bearing the Cross (verso)
https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103R3X

Poussin 83.GG.345
Apollo and the Muses on Mount Parnassus
https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103QW9

Tiepolo 85.GG.409
Flight into Egypt (recto); Various Studies (verso)
https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103QZE

Tiepolo 2005.65
The Holy Family with Angels before an Arch
https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/1098NN

Tiepolo 2003.131
Punchinellos Approaching a Woman
https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/1096F9

Piranesi 88.GB.18
An Ancient Port
https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103R27

Moreau 98.GC.153
Diomedes Devoured by Horses
https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/107VTR

Taken by the impression that the lyrics to “Hope” (Vampire Weekend) were not just cut-ups of carefully curated commonplaces (as they often are) from such places as The French Connection or John Le Carré (who, I can only assume, is the ur-text which I received avidly at a young aged, in expedited, formulized, or dulled form as the Alex Rider series), but, even more particularly (still, an imagined impression), were, at least at the start, cut up according to some sort of grid, a regular grid in which series of lines were first written row-wise and then sung column-wise (say), not without advance attention to questions of rhyme and meter, of course.

The bull has gored the matador

The U.S. Army won the war
The meaning died in metaphor
I hope you let it go

The phoenix burned, but did not rise
Now half the body's paralyzed
There's no one left to criticize
I hope you let it go

I hope you let it go
I hope you let it go
The enemy's invincible
I hope you let it go

The prophet said we'd disappear
The prophet's gone, but we're still here
His prophecy was insincere
I hope you let it go

The righteous rage was foolish pride
The conquerors did not divide
The call keeps coming from inside
I hope you let it go

I hope you let it go
Hope you let it go
Your enemy's invincible
I hope you let it go

When everyone who lived it died
The files were declassified
The slobs still called it suicide
I hope you let it go

The signatories broke the pact
The surfer sacked the quarterback
The bag fell down onto the tracks
I hope you let it go

I hope you let it go
Hope you let it go
The enemy's invincible
I hope you let it go

The embassy's abandoned now
The flag that flew is on the ground
The painting burned, the statue drowned
I hope you let it go

The moving train accelerates
It's always fast and always late
It never leaves the Empire State
I hope you let it go

I hope you let it go
I hope you let it go
Our enemy's invincible
I hope you let it go

The sentencing was overturned
The killer freed, the court adjourned
A hope betrayed, a lesson learned
I hope you let it go

I did the things you asked me to
I testified what wasn't true
But now I lost my faith in you
I hope you let it go

I hope you let it go
I hope you let it go
My enemy's invincible
I've had to let it go

18 July 2025

Yesterday, having read the texts of Circus Circus in the morning, I recalled, with some kind of fondness or sense of appeal, throughout the day, this image, an equivalent of some phenomenon I know well but don't often pose in such a reified, concrete, manipulable, tangible way: "By locating constraints within forms, motifs, and compositions, then, the goal is to work the form out as quickly as possible, in order to make the freest paintings which entails getting lost in the paint."

This morning, reading this on Nancy's Ego Sum, I thought of the same: "In Rule Twelve of the Rules, Descartes writes about how, while he is writing (dum scribo), his pen's movements occur throughout it, instantly tracing the letters in air at the end opposite from the nib. His interest in writing is not in the flow of either the ink or the act of writing by hand in cursive, but in the instant, 'which is not a chronological measure' Nancy notes, of the appearance of a single letter or figure. Through the transfer of motion throughout the pen, the figure is transferred to the mind such that 'the figures of things have instantly become ideas', allowing Descartes to 'have spirited away the material cloak of figures without having to demonstrate anything about this operation'. The instant of writing, then, as an instantaneous transfer between world, body, and mind, allows oneself to understand what one is: 'I collect myself [Je me recueille] in writing'. Such an instant of self-awareness or -discovery is what Descartes seeks, as always, to instigate in his readers, who 'figure yourselves' in the writing of themselves that occurs by reading Descartes' words on the instantaneous transfer of motion and understanding from hand to pen to eye to mind. Reading the act whereby Descartes understands himself is a moment of intuition, 'a pure vision of the mind' – but one that requires the machinery of imagination, sense-perception, and memory – so '[t]he subject is not a pure mind: It is the pure mind that puts to work, within itself, the machine'. In putting to work the machinery of these impure aspects of the mind so as to intuit the subject in its purity of figuring through instantaneous transfer of motion, '[w]e forge, we feign, we fiction: fingimus, we figure and we figure ourselves out'."

But I don't think that my wall paintings can be said to be such a quill-back-tracing figuring-out of myself, not yet, at least. Nor do they contain all that Mark Prince was able to read into the layers of modernism-discourse and irony-authenticity in Grotjahn's work (etc.--it was a good piece, I thought, his long essay for Circus Circus).

Provisional note, to fill in from my screenshots tomorrow morning: The main thing is, Grotjahn à la Descartes and Lacan, What it made me realize is what vindicates my longstanding provisional interest in painting as a medium as-such, which has hitherto had an axiomatic character; it will

retain this axiomatic character, insofar as any sort of devotion always does; but, analogous to the passions which support and sustain and confirm freely chosen love, and to the profound aesthesis of rightness which, if one is lucky, converts or confirms one's deeply and authentically held (and, once, and each time anew, freely chosen) religious belief, analogous to these two devotions, the following re. the painter's devotion to painting, the medium, as such: What vindicates that, what Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe reading Lacan, presented here by a canny translator, made me realize: That the aspects particular to my apprehension of the as-medium of painting, are precisely coincident with what Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, by way of Lacan, show to be aspects proper ("proper": Really, what I mean is matters-of-fact co-implicit with, or states of affairs derivable from) any discourse tout court, lived life being itself such a discourse, insofar as man is the speaking animal (?), insofar, that is, as persons are events of speaking being (what I am meaning to say, or rather to repeat, is that all the things that by painting I mean to show to be true of Painting, are also all the things that one like Nancy would show, by saying, to be true of saying; and that, chez Nancy, "saying" includes everything real (I stand by this word) about being, because existence (ex-sistence) is in excess of being, and ex-sistence is equivalent to exscription in that once one is already existing one is already witnessing or saying or "enunciating" one's being).

Repeated, by means of the material I meant to save toward this: [Filled in on 19 July 2025 just before noon, after painting (see below note):] There is a site of intense parallelism between what Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe see in Lacan (which, by the way, I'm only getting secondhand so far; I just needed it expedited; the substitution for the real text can be easily made because the below is well-linked with citations) and what Douglas Fogle sees (much less articulately--I am doing him what I think is a great generosity but not, crucially, a misplaced one) in Mark Grotjahn, and I will just show those seeings side-by-side:

"[Lacan] defines his détournement of logic in the following terms: "I have indicated to what point I have pushed the détournement of the mathematical algorithm for my own ends." It would seem, then, that another, more accurate translation would be "misappropriation," as a recent example sug-gests.' Unfortunately, there is no question of appropriation, even less of misappropriation, in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's determination of the term détournement. First, misappropriation has too much of a negative, even pejorative connotation. Détournement does not designate anything that could be measured against a norm or propriety. The authors are quite explicit on this point: "There is no basis on which we can reproach Lacan for lacking linguistic rigor"; in fact, Lacan's strategy "evades critical jurisdiction" (TL., 115). In this sense, détourne-ment evades the simple logic of propriety as well. There is no proper meaning on the basis of which one could judge a mis-appropriation. Lacan does not appropriate, nor misappropriate precisely because détournement exhibits a certain excess that evades any proper meaning. A more negative sense of détournement in this context would force Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy into a metaphysical position that they would otherwise seek to avoid. This is why they are careful to contrast détourne-ment with the importation of a concept: whereas an importation borrows a conceptual unity in order to appropriate it into a new system in a regulated way, détournement borrows a concept "without working it," that is, leaves room for a certain alterity or polysemy which resists containment and appropria-tion. Diversion [détournement] is, as they put it, impure, "an impurity such that it could go as far as to mimic or divert importation itself" (TL., 89). Ultimately détournement designates an undecidable "blurring" (TL., 115) which affects Lacan's discourse, a displacing effect which is less the effect of some intentions than the

excess against which any discourse, including Lacan's, must be measured. That excess is the resource of the ambivalence that Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy seek to uncover in Lacan's text." "Grotjahn manifests a playfulness in his work that belies an antipathy to systems and easy taxonomic categories while paradoxically mimicking those very systems."

I say all this really quite under the spell of Mark Prince's rather idiosyncratic reading of Mark Grotjahn, with its heavy insistence on following the scrutiny under which Grotjahn puts authorship. The Marks' shared calculus on this front yields much which is, if imperfectly, at least, to some extent, robustly in step with what, above, I draw out toward painting from Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe on Lacan.

Three other notes from the frontmatter of The Title of the Letter, these coming from the authors and not the translator; these are more actionable.

First, I note this condensation of a certain allure whose pull I feel; maybe I can use this condensation to triangulate just the right infinite irony sandwich, and somehow accomplish-exorcise the said allure in some appropriate Mathieuian (and Mathieu-legacy-problematizing) gesture: "To the extent that Lacan has carried out what is, in fact, a quite singular enterprise of sublating philosophical discourse (whether referred to as "psychoanalytic," "Lacanian," or "of the unconscious"), he has reinvested the dominant values and positions of the philosophical. One must understand sublation here in the sense that Derrida gives it when translating Hegel's aufheben: to suppress and conserve on another level. In this dialectical operation par excellence, Lacan adopted the aims and essential project of the philosophical: the appropriation of a truthful knowledge, systematicity, and the mastery of foundation. He also reproduced and concretized its fundamental political gesture: knowledge is invested with power, decision becomes sovereign, and the communal order is given unitary and authoritarian representation [interject: It is precisely the allure of this, which, daring not speak its name, has animated the entire accumulation of all my notes, and each of the halting impulses toward their systematization]. This explains the well-known succession, in the history of the Lacanian movement, of what today are called "perverse effects" (perhaps, in fact, maliciously authorized by Lacan himself, in view of the final "dissolution," whose meaning for him remains to be considered). Generally, then, it is a question of the sublation of a closed discourse, or more precisely, of the sublation of the closure of that discourse where philosophy, since Heidegger, recognizes and confronts its own end. Psychoanalysis, in turn, might itself succumb to this closure" (xxviii - xxix; emphasis mine).

Second, another condensation of a different allure whose pull I also feel; this one, too, I think I can accomplish-exorcise by some appropriate gesture like the printing and display of a massive stack of my notes under several titles including "summa pictorica," thus reifying them as texts in a way that comes with sufficient quiddity from a skew angle like that of Grotjahn or, say, Laura Owens, a printing which perhaps can even be accompanied, in the form of some subtitle or epigraph, by these very words of Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe: "The following pages only appear in the form of a "book" because they exceeded the limits of publication in a journal. Without a doubt, it is inevitable that this presentation (though by no means voluminous) runs at least the risk of producing one of the effects that our culture attaches to a "book" even in (on the

basis of?) its materiality—a kind of binding effect (of course, in all of its metaphoricity...)—and that might lead one to think that this had the intention of being "a book on Lacan." / We hope, at least, that reading the work will dissipate this impression" (I've lost the page number, but it's the book's very opening, under the heading "Setting the Scene").

Third and last, I'd perhaps like to appropriate these words, too, "authors" taking on then the sense of "Ludovic and I," which is to say, "just me," Ludovic being "Nemo," but also still multiple, because of the self-fulfilling gesture of doubling, whose reality (problematized but real) inheres in its very problematization, which is to say, incantatory-wise. "The two authors have elaborated the text together. If each of them has taken responsibility for the final writing of particular chapters, they have nevertheless written certain passages together, with selective interventions of one "style" into the other when required by the course of the work. In this play of writing, where marked differences are doubtless quite identifiable, one will see that this work is no more a "book" than it is a simple reading."

19 July 2025

I've been wanting a surface of thickish paint, or thin, but in either case solid, and having much plateau-like surface even if broken up by spackly relief. Like Lovis Corinth's painting at the Kimbell, or even like the out-of-focus zones of a Courbet, but, really, best, like a Grotjahn thickly painted on cardboard mounted to linen. Hoping that it wouldn't come out as me "doing" a Grotjahn, I tried painting an "armature" like my "Pink Angels" one, but with a palette knife, and with my eye on this particular representation of a "Stein-basic" palette.

Here's the first wet-in-wet layer; I'll next add more pure red, a small amount of pure yellow laced into other pastes, a strong mid-green, and perhaps a small amount of blue-glowing filaments, but mostly, much white, textured white, zinc and aluminum, to make it feel more like the above representation (with all its Matisse-Hantaï white canals) than like any one image therein.

Why do I have the impulse to make myself into a postironic performer of Mathieu's allure, with all the layers of postirony that Mark Prince reads into Mark Grotjahn, by signing in a small,

graphical globus cruciger just above center? Having to do with at least three things: First, my morning's drenching in the space between two Jean-Lucs, between Marion's ontotheology Nancy's onto-a-theology, and trying to strain out of this space and into what I'd always dreamed of as showing the showing of theophany itself in paint, as the truest and most direct access to the unmoving fixation upon revelation as my defining unmoving fixation (counterpart to what authorship is for Grotjahn, his knot of animating questions, all his investigations / interrogations / subversions all being oriented toward it); and second, my desire to exorcise all my desires which persist around what I call "allure," thinking to somehow exorcise them by doing something with the legacy of Mathieu (and perhaps by this near-miss route, this indirect direction, getting into / alongside / beyond Hantaï); and third, the surfacing in the last lines--"Bochner and Smithson included an epigraph in their essay in the form of a quote from Pascal stating that 'Nature is an infinite sphere, whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.' The same might be said of the work of Mark Grotjahn"--of Douglas Fogle's Parkett essay on Grotjahn ("In the Center of the Infinite," an essay which is not necessarily great but is important) of what lives in my head as the Cartesian-Pascalian world, so quintessentially 17th-century with the major-keyedness of its faith frank and simple at the end of such protobaroque discourses as the Meditations or the Pensées, these sensitized by Eliot's introduction to the Pensées, by Nancy's reading of Descartes in Ego Sum, by what Tomkins called the Cartesian strain in Duchamp by way of knitting his chess life into his life.--

--And after all this another image, a backgammon board with the same Grotjahnian red-orange-yellow fanning-spread and deep green sideboards, but rather than taking the board as-such as a picture as-such (Zak Kitnick has done this) to make its triangular spines wobble amongst each other and perhaps sway according to come global current-rule (reeds in Tarkovsky's water, the current Dunham read into Grotjahn*); and that the mouth or landscape that results have a wobbly world-feeling that would render it directly linkable to this particular Laura Owens that lives better in my head (synthesizing into itself, as it does there, the show's documentation's other works) than it does in this photo, which, yesterday or the day before, I thought also of wanting to paint my own version of, as I was turning right onto Franklin from Vermont going south, wanting to show my own such idea of a world of orbs and spheres inhabitable in the same way as those of Le Petit Prince, which is also to say like those of Super Mario Galaxy and, perhaps, Dante's heaven, or, more precisely, Dante's whole universe, given the flip-flopping of gravity that responds storybook-game-like to the traversal of a (your, my) point-of-view at that jointure between hell and purgatory. (Nor is this Owens orb extricable from my above impulse to mark in a little globus cruciger.) [Well after the fact, indeed after the second fact, that is, my second look at an image of this painting, in the early evening today, I found a Roberta Smith review of this show, in which she calls my painting "the most memorable in the show," and describes it thus: "the devices of stain painting -- broad arcs of green, blue and tan -- create a big, wheeling earth's-curve sense of space. Over this are scattered notational marks, thick and mildly Expressionistic, that flatten the space but also drift aimlessly, as if a swatch of landscape had been splintered and tossed into orbit."]

The above is what I read as that kind of globe; the two below, and much of her work besides, were laced into my memory of it.

Maybe Laura Owens has long since (as early as 2000) seized upon what I struggled for months to enunciate at the interface between phylogenetics and formalism, organicity and art, Focillon's Vie des formes and the life sciences (botany, mycology, etc.).

This is "New Work by Laura Owens (1999-2000) and John Hutton Balfour's Botanical Teaching Diagrams (1840-1879)" at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh:

What I knew was that formalist painting could run wild with these engines; it turns out that she already let it.

Yesterday I read Bois's "Kahnweiler's Lesson"; I'd like to revisit his "linguistic digression" into Saussure and the Russian formalists to get a grip on its stakes (now rather than later, as it bears on Title of the Letter), and on those of Kahnweiler's Neo-Kantians, too; for now, I just paste its closing, because Mallarmé is not quite the beating heart but rather the oscillating void-force-knot at the core of my re-Symbolism, so if this charts the best arc from Mallarmé through Picasso (and thence to almost all 20th century painting that I care about) then it is to be fixed firmly:
"I wish to conclude at this point, for when Kahnweiler speaks of cubism and Mallarmé, he is not satisfied with simply an anecdotal connection between this or that work of Picasso and Un coup de dés (the most striking of which, participating in what we can call, after Freud, the logic of cubist 'wit,' occurs in the papier collé where the title of the newspaper article, "un coup de théâtre," becomes "un coup de thé"). Kahnweiler links the virtuality, the nonsubstantiality of cubist signs with Mallarméan art, an art of folds, of spacing, of differentiation--of an exacerbation of the characteristics of writing, in Jacques Derrida's broad sense. He insists on the object's "vibratory suspension," on the poem's incantatory character that makes the reader a creator. He even notes the war against chance that Mallarméan poetry endeavors to wage (the work's totalitarian structure, the determination of elements by "relations"), and links the "cubism" of Apollinaire's calligrammes to the importance of blank spaces in Mallarme's work and their check on the signifier's linearity. Kahnweiler's linking of cubist painting and Mallarmé is itself a theoretical act that makes us pardon his dogmatic anathemas against abstract painting (for which even Picasso reproached him). Although he certainly was not the first to make this connection (as early as 1911, Ardengo Soffici wrote in La Voce that Braque's and Picasso's paintings "have the quality of a hieroglyph which serves to write a lyric reality ... identical to a certain extent with Stéphane Mallarmé's elliptic syntax and grammatical transpositions"), he was the first to understand its significance. / Rather than enter upon this issue in detail, which would be the subject of another article, I would like to quote these lines of Mallarmé's Magie, which served as a basis for Kahnweiler's connection. I cite them in relation to Guitare, partition, verre (fig. 14), one of Picasso's first papiers collés, which was completed some months after the Guitare, once the shock of the Grebo mask had been absorbed: 'To evoke, in deliberate obscurity, the silenced object by allusive, indirect words, that amount to a uniform stillness, admits an attempt close to creating: verisimilar at the edge of the idea solely set into play by the enchanter of letters, until indeed, some illusion equal to the gaze shimmers. Verse, incantatory trace! and

we will not deny to the circle which rhyme perpetually closes and opens, a resemblance with the fairy's or the magician's rounds amid the grass.’”

This lion of Laura Owens, rather close in milieu-space to that of Dana Schutz, frees me from whatever interdiction I had felt emanating from the latter (as a side note, I recollect that when I was overcome by Schutz’s lion I was waiting for a coffee in Frogtown, which is now to me Elysian more than in name only, having learnt sometime in the past several months that it is where Mark Grotjahn’s paintings come from, where his paintings happen).

And so, beginning from said Schutz, here are some lions prominent to me, not for expressivity nor for redolence of any other specific quality per se, but just because each has the feeling of being a particularly luminous or charged knot, a particularly tight knot of light, arriving to me with ensembles of associations of unexpected angles and proximities, say.

Lascaux detail, and my two sub-details below:

[The immediately above retroactively illuminates, from a distance of about twelve months, the immediately below, Beaufils:]

Corfu:

From the Tate, Gaudier-Brzeska:

And, perhaps, Rohmer's Signe du lion.
All of which is to say--I could decenter a lion's tiara, and dislocate crux from orb in the orbis cruciger, to comparable effect, thereby plotting a consistent (too-consistent?) Nancy-Agamben-Eckhart take on the provisionality of ekklesia, the complication of the investment of an earthly institution with all the allure in the world, etc.

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For the sense--the real presence--of freedom to survive the working (œuvrement, the bringing-up of it to the highest attainable height toward the ideal of beauty): That is the most elusive quality in painting

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There are two kinds of painter; one is garrulous; I am not that kind

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Why does Descartes for me seem a dull yellow with gray-black and plenty of white, but also a very crisp strong red (with stripes of bright green, cyan, and maybe yellow and magenta) cut with hard black? Is the Grotjahn linked to the latter idea, which I keep trying and failing to find via the Rachofsky collection, actually the one from Wood's "Spiritual warrior" or "Ovitz's library"?

Ought the ellipses, since they aren't drawn with a ruler, be more expressly gestural (and thus problematize the performativity of the trait)? Even as far as Mathieu's from-tube-drawing, or making them fail to close, or etc.

Looking again at the Mallarmé note on which Bois ended “Kahnweiler’s lesson,” is the paint texture I’ve been seeking via a Grotjahnian palette-knife-painting (a texture so solid and flat that you can bounce acoustic waves off of it, say*), and was going to look, next, to Klimt and to the Courtauld Cézanne** for, is it really better to be found in a further operationalization—even unto Richterian baroque space (cf. Tatol), and cutting clear of Julia Rommel—of my recent device of using a plywood scrap and stapling and a roller and 150 (not minding blowouts, or drips, etc., in fact reveling in the instances where the drip stream ends up as a 45 degree diagonal that spans the canvas edge) to get supersmooth, a device which, by the way, is appealingly Certeau-ian in its authentic on-the-fly status, and, even further, and less replicably, its perruque provenance?

[Much later on I realized that I had better examples of the quality I’m getting at: Manet. And I realized, even, that another perfectly fine example of it is my thick-slick-oil on aluminum copy of the deux bocks of Manet, which even know is propped on my printer in perfectly plain view; such is the extent of the apperceptive compartmentalization of my tiny world, the baroque implication of the manifold that is my domestic inhabitation.]

[**

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That “Painteds” would be a suitably quirky and nice, stoner adjacent, title for an exhibition; it reminds me, first of all, of “Rabids” and the related game “Chaos” (plural of Chao); the paintings therein can bear indexed titles such as “Painteds 1” and “Painted A4” and “Paintid” and “Plainted” and “Plainte” etc. (This prompted, if not justifiably, by Lacan’s “Écrits.”)

What painting could go under the title “Cartesian painting”? A writing of my name? A drawing of a face? An impressionist impression, or a merleau-pontyian nose-inclusion? A formalized conjugation of baby vision?

[While reading The title of the letter:] Or would the Cartesian painting par excellence be a phallic sign? Or, perhaps even better, a puttiphallus—being that (perhaps fueled by unlimited stores of Freud-Lacan aura) it conjures a notion of “ur-site” which analogizes nicely the same conjuring of ur-site which accompanies Descartes’s own enunciation of the cogito (the text proper, I mean).

Title of the Letter, Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe:

If I did the same to a single work of Grotjahn’s, would it be a gated mask? A circus face? Or that one which I singled out last summer (I think, whatever day I also pinned that Etruscan lost-wax figure)?: “It is thus preferable to read one text of Lacan. This means that it is preferable to read, in a sense, each of his texts as a focus of concentration and an agency of repetition of all the others; and it is preferable to read one text as the singular text that it wants to be, with what such a will cannot fail to con-note: the resource of the event, of circumstantial enunciation and therefore, of speech.”

This is the immediate pretext of the immediately above: “One could, most certainly, conduct this study on the entirety of Lacan's work-which would amount to presuming a readable or rather visible system as such, apart from the diversity of the texts of which it would be the locus. We will treat of the question of a Lacanian systematicity (at least within one piece [écrit), in due time. However, in order to begin our reading, there need be no other assumptions than those of Lacan himself, specifically: --the will to displace (or overcome?) the systematicity of theoretical discourse in the name of a Freudian revolution imposing "the necessity of humbling the arrogance of all monocentrism." Thus Lacan is able to declare that "[his] statements have nothing in common with a theoretical exposé justified by a closure; --the will, consequently, to produce each intervention as an accomplished unity of speech, or of text, which gathers the entire stakes of the work in each enunciation, and defers in the same gesture the totality of statements.”

If I replicated Lacan's gesture here, would it be with Fried’s formalism? Playing the role of said classical discourse which my discourse would both reproduce and subvert (or whatever they say), that is. “What is principally at stake, then, is a discourse attending to the demands of the universitas and of science. Lacan's text inscribes itself as a discourse, within and between its lines, If Lacan was able to say, "I always place buoys by which one can navigate in my discourse,"" this is because it is possible—if not easy—to find the point and itinerary of the concept (of the properly conceptual procedures, importations, or productions). / Is it not somewhat paradoxical that this text, a text devoted to the subversion of the "classical" authority

of discourse. should itself reconstruct another classical discourse? Even so we still have to read this paradox.”

On these grounds, the discourse that is painting becomes distinctive (and this is just one of the distinctions that are eternally proper to it, derived from, flowing from, or resources of, its axiomatic medium-definition as marks (or pastes?) on a (rectangular?) surface (the tight fungibility, or plasticity, of these terms is quite a part of the game)). Because of this materiality, this fundamental and omnipresent localization of matters of fact in the discourse of painting, we already get a long step into what it is about painting (and thereby about the subject, or about the person, or about Dasein, or about being in general, which is to say (clumsily) the universe, God, everything) that I am to say through painting.
“The second concept at stake is that of material support. We will refer here to two texts: on the one hand, "The Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter," where, on the basis of the letter (the missive) which gives Poe's story its title and which is hidden, we recall, in a place so evident that no one sees it, Lacan defines the materiality of the signifier in two ways: as the signifier's ability to be located, its "relation to place" (E., 23/P., 38)—but this localization is always, strangely, a "being-out-of-place," [un manque à sa place] if place designates a location in objective reality-and as its indivisible character This localization and indivisibility consequently lend an odd materiality to the signifier. This materiality is itself odd in that it is unquantifiable (E., 23,24/P., 38, 39). On the other hand, "Function and Field of Speech..," where, on the basis of the question of the relation of language to the body, language is defined as not being immaterial (‘It is subtle body,’ Lacan states, ‘but body it is’) …”

[21 July 2025]

Not 100% clear on it but the sense I’m getting from Nancy and LL is that, in place of what Lacan thought signification is, where the bar is successfully traversed, what is really possible is just combinatory syntagmata-chains where the alphabetic units each have the structure of pure difference, pure negativity, like how tohubohu preconditioned the original creative act of separation of the waters (the authors give this image, as the miniatures in which threads or veils of rain span the gap, ten-ish pages after it appears to me): There is distinction, pushing and holding apart, but the only way to distinguish the waters above is by opposition to the waters below and (precisely, crucially) vice versa, so that a distinction between lack and presence is only ever equivalent to a distinction from a different point of view of lack from lack of lack, so that the question of which sexual differend (here I am preempting what I think is to come soon in the account, namely, that the condition described here is the same structuring condition of sexual difference) really has the lack is a matter of an undecidable flickering. Thus, to me, the phallus takes on a pyrrhic, almost poignant, almost even nostalgic valence, because it is the safest, most obvious, and first form taken by the assertion of presence (in opposition to lack), a positive attribution, an identity: what the point-of-view (the self-thinking “subject”) most urgently craves. And if even this most basic positivity is made to flicker, I.e., is reduced to a split truth, a half-truth, then it is seen to have precisely the same status and character as the Cartesian cogito (as

shown by Nancy and also as felt by me—even in 2014 it was not consolation enough, it already felt like this to me).

I want to make a lost-wax bronze series with variations, as I've said; the bronze in the Mépris apartment is paragonal, as is the (not bronze) Socrates statue at Cistercian

I still need, I think, to pair the Grotjahn essay comment about the signs reproducing the world with my espresso cup project & the part-by-part inductive aestheticization of the whole that I theorized therewith

21 July 2025

Bois on Lissitzky, -inf 0 inf:
Makes me think again of my globes cruciger, or more precisely of my project of theophany; it is not enough for me to simply assemble a vocabulary of ways in which the unrepresentable has been represented (perspective which makes parallel lines meet at a point, that which they never do in sight, because man cannot see the infinite; or Damisch's cloud; or how Lissitzky posits white as an aufhebung of blue, the totality of which, according to da Vinci's rule, I can now see to be the real signified of Mallarmé's "l'azur," a blue that is purely ideal since its bluer — more distant—than any eye can behold, etc)—I need to do something more, e.g. a syntagm of a halo superposed over the globes cruciger, a little rebus, though this isn't too satisfying either; I want to do something with the mathematics-resorting frame Bois-Liss posits, activating Proun and Suprematism and a whole (Damischian) history of art besides, but what?

Separately: re-locate what Bois says Lissitzky theorized but did not put in practice, with rotated solids; because this sounds a lot like what I'm up to in my "armature"

And: From this, I could perform (and sensitize it with aluminum and the very liquid media I like) a whole problematics of horizontal vs vertical paintings & make a chiasm that shows 3 alternate means that uncannize the usual one (vertically painted & vertically displayed)—although it might be more fun to just facetiously read this into Grotjahns work, proceeding from certain photo documents: “This search for a radical reversibility went even further. In a letter dating from 1923, he writes:
‘You go on to enquire on which wall you should hang my work. When I made my Proun, I did not think of filling one of these surfaces with yet another decorative patch. You should be treating the problem in quite the right manner, as prescribed by common sense, if you wanted to order a cupboard for these documents of my work. Subsequently, labels will be attached to them, indicating to what sphere of human activity these documents belong and in which epoch these documents originated, You say that we are hung on walls in the museums? It is not my fault that the museum directors are convinced of the perpetual infallibility of their own spectacle lenses so that it never occurs to them to devise another method of exhibiting.’ What is at stake here is not so much the struggle against the usual mode of visibility available to works of art in a museum, but the change of status Lissitzky envisions for his Prounen: they are not paintings any more, but documents, and they should be stored as such, that is horizontally. But horizontality is another inversion of the pictorial mode of relationship (between object and beholder) being criticized by Lissitzky. In fact, he himself directly connected horizontality to the disorientation in space that he wanted to achieve, in the magazine cover he designed for Broom [repr 88]: the fact that magazines frequently lie on the table with their titles upside down gave Lissitzky the idea,"* his wife tells us. In this shift of the verticality of the painting to the horizontality of the document, I am inclined to read a fundamental transformation, an antecedent to the shift which Leo Steinberg perceived twenty years ago …”

More ideas from this: Two new variations on my blank wall: Each having the painting on the wall shifted up much higher; instantiate perspective on it, a perspective, as I once had it, locating the intended viewing somewhere up above, like a bon-dieu-type God; call that one “assertion of belief painting”; then, replicate this but add a ladder, and call that a “theosis tool”; I can do other concept-bricolage type things to my wall-view-armature too: Make the recession of the walls technically reverse perspective, make it axonometric, make it Matisse-flat (Egyptian?), etc

I think I’m almost there—I think I just need to think just a bit harder in order to figure out how, if thought properly, these things which are almost jokes can be synthesized into what I really want, which is my own uniquely re-Symbolist conception of the painting, which is neither Renaissance picture space nor any of the others (up to Steinberg’s flatbed), but which has its own specific and motivated character and can be definitively distinguished from each of the alternatives in turn.

All Buchloh’s mentions of Ryman (Manzoni often looped in), esp on 360 and one time before

then, come closer to putting into words what is essential in what I see in Grotjahn than any other words I can think of:

[I didn't end up fulfilling this note until 26 July 2025; at the end of this note, I just paste from there.*]

It seems to me here that it might be the case that everything I value in painting is precisely the complement—everything but, and nothing in—of what modernist painting is shown to be here; however, my lowest (deepest?) desires, on the other hand, are always precisely for what modernist painting is shown to be here. The way forward seems to be for me to find a way to operationalize desire-constraint conflict, but this is precisely the impossible. "It is with these geometrical all-over formations in 1915 that the pictorial plane is divided into more or less regular sections, and with Mondrian's geometric all-over formations in 1918-1919 (as for example in Lozenge with Gray Lines, 1918, and Checkerboard with Light Colors, 1919, both at Gementemuseum, The Hague) that compositional relationalism had been definitely replaced by systematized surface organizations. These chart--just as Johns' Flags or Targets would forty years later--the pictorial plane in a predictable, calculated manner that excludes all subsequent compositional choices, once the first decision for a parameter or a permutation had been made." / Central holistic imagery and its counterpart, the non-relational grid, invalidate all traditional expectations for composition to function as a complex play of spatial and planar relationships, to generate a perceptual balance of tensions and weights, a vivid interaction of chro-matic, linear, and spatial pictorial elements. This serialization of pictorial planar elements is transferred from the plane to the volumetric body by Rodchenko in 1920 …" (361-362).

What I need so badly is to look at all of my paintings, find what I hate about them (doing them and looking at them), and eliminate all that, no matter the cost, with no prejudice. What I hate I cannot yet name, but the closest idea I have to it so far comes from Luke Herrigel, on how he felt about filmmaking before he saw Rivette (roughly, "too many decisions for which I don't have authority / expertise").

[* And here are the mentions of Ryman by Buchloh in Formalism and Historicity that came to me as so loaded with a particular way of looking at painting with so much traction for me--it is how I've tried and not often succeeded to look at Grotjahn, and it is, I think, the only way of looking through which I can achieve a sense of magnificence even from within the Eden of unalienated labor: "Apart from Robert Ryman--whose work Buren admired and collected at an early moment--very few artists had in fact singularized the elements of painting to the degree that Stella had in the late Fifties and early Sixties" (51). "It is precisely this systematic differentiation of the constituent elements of painting that makes Toroni's work central to the elaboration of a painterly aesthetic after Ryman and Stella in Europe: singularization of the brushstroke, separation of imprint from distribution, hinging the indexical mark in the gridded space of the surface, are all strategies of a radical painterly deconstruction that remind us also

once again of comparable attitudes developed by Manzoni and Brown. The problem of (non-)composition--having been among the prime concerns of American painting since Ellsworth Kelly and Stella--is equally addressed by Toroni in yet another way that is similar to the solutions worked out by the Minimalists. Abolishing the problem of composition by replacing perceptual principles of spatial order with conceptual principles of distribution, is precisely what Judd had decided when he used mathematical series to structure and position the spatial and material quantities of his work" (66). This next mention, actually, is a site at which I'd diverge from Ryman significantly: "It is precisely the tradition of that discovery of the inherent chromatic value of all objects and materials that links the Constructivist and Duchamp's readymade position—all readymades are in fact monochrome objects--with a contemporary painterly practice such as the one of Robert Ryman which in fact synthesizes the chromatics of the readymade with that of the monochrome. Arguing for such an understanding of color as an inherent and specific quality of materials, he speaks about the chromatic values of his surfaces: 'Always the surface is used. The gray of the steel comes through; the brown of the corrugated paper comes through; the linen comes through; the cotton which is not the same as the paint—it seems white-all of those things are consid-ered. It's really not monochrome painting at all. The white just happened because it's a paint and it doesn't interfere'" (339). Here Hantaï is obviously very present, apparently disconnected from the Soviet conversation but so attentive to Duchamp and in any case getting to the scriptural most closely via the armature of the mass in Ecriture rose rather than either of the mentioned options here: "... when it comes to mechanical mark-making processes that displaced the conventional forms of drawing, for example, Manzoni's and Ryman's works of the late 1950s are as profoundly implicated in a historical dialogue with the analytical laboratory positions in Russian and Soviet Constructivism (e.g., Rodchenko's compass and ruler drawings in 1919, or even earlier, Duchamp's Three Standard Stoppages from 1913) as they depended upon, as Ryman claims, his admiration for the work of Mark Rothko (or Barnett Newman, for that matter). The athletic calligraphy of the New York School (as Robert Rosenblum once called it was now transformed into the scriptural, the repetitive, the molecular movement of the brush, increasingly scrutinized and objectified" (351). "Comparable to his more visible peer Stella, Ryman serialized the brush marks in his paintings already in the late 1950s, by stacking them up mechanically, as it were, almost identical in size (width, length, and quantity of pigment applied). Yet their minuscule variations made them still legible as brushstrokes, not as the mere mechanical painterly imprints they would become in the work of Niele Toroni ten years later. / More importantly, however, in one of Ryman's paintings from 1961, a column of horizontal, fairly equalized brush marks suddenly turns into a stack of signatures toward the bottom of the painting. Thus Ryman performs in his work what will become a crucial feature in Toroni's as well: the dialectics of facture, operating in perpetual suspense between a gesture of transcendentality and the functions of a trademark that guarantees authenticity like the signature itself. In his discussion of Malevich's work, Yve-Alain Bois has brilliantly described this dialectic: 'Facture, in terms of painterly touch, is only a substitute for the signature of the artist (this is now no longer a body that acts, but it is a spirit) and it becomes the guarantee of the "authenticity" of the painting: caught in a movement that is both transcendental and commercial, textural facture remains the object of a profound ambiguity.'" (352). At the end there, I see what I often talk about--the Viennese or Klimtian lushness that Grotajhn injected into Circus circus and that Justin Caguiat has become so associated with, the lushness whose simply voluntary but crucially non-mechanical reproducibility is one of the primary focuses of my painting such as I

see it. Continuing immediately thereupon: “Ryman develops a wide range of factural devices; his brushstrokes are differentiated by length and width, by quantity and pigment charge, and by the directions of arm and hand movement. Thus he opens an entirely new realm of infinite aestheticization of the once goal-oriented "laboratory" investigation of the basic pictorial elements of pictorial language (subjecting it thus inevitably to the fetishization that this process of infinite aesthetic variation implies)” (352 - 353). “The idealist notion of opticality prevents Fried from recognizing the inherently dialectical quality of tactility embodied in the indexical, singularized structure: that it functions simultaneously as the pure trace of a process and as a sign originating in the materiality of painterly production. / But it is not until Ryman's and Toroni's work that the dialectic of process and pictorial sign will appear most programmatically, as though it was performed in a laboratory experiment. And it is only in their work that the analytical approach to facture's indexicality and singularity now manifestly constitutes painting as the outcome of a complex interaction between multiple factors and forces: between tool, material, and surface, between procedure and gesture, suspended between the trace of matter and the trace of bodily performance all are displayed now with an exemplary transparency. In the development of this logic from Ryman's to Toroni's work between 1958 and 1968, the indexical brush mark becomes not only increasingly isolated and regularized but also increasingly systematical: size and placement now become the subject of rigorous serial repetition rather than merely aim at an approximate regularity. Furthermore, what distinguishes Toroni's work from the early work of Ryman and Stella is the emphatic limitation to the individual brush mark as the smallest, repeatable, identical module of painterly operation while maintaining at the same time a margin of chromatic variation within a rigorously fixed format of composition, chroma, and facture” (360). Then he begins tracing a problematic of “non-relational composition,” whose stakes are threaded through my vision of painting but whose bottom-line or telos is quite foreign to my own: The players are the same, the endgame is quite orthogonal. And after that comes Buchloh’s acrobatics around questions of historicity and aestheticization, which I am less interested in, for now, though it will eventually merit full engagement.]

Overcome, despite all the thoughts and resolutions that in the meantime have filled my head (see notes above, today, plus continuation of Title of the Letter notes placed in yesterday), by a desire for Kirchner, for paintings that look like his, quite independent from any notion I have about his work’s expressivity (I know next to nothing about Kirchner the man; I don’t feel any conflict with my commitments against expressionist accounts of the value of art). Perhaps, in particular, a desire for Davos Kirchner. Paintings such as these:

Those paintings, even more than the tapestry whose design I elevated to a lofty status before:

And, somehow, this desire is connected to this in-progress painting, with which I became, at this point, extraordinarily discouraged, knowing in my heart that I fail most of the painting I try; I did not even want this color to be pink (it's my Rive Gauche rouge primaire and Blick zinc white; I knew those make pink, and yet what I wanted was a true primary red, just desaturated), and yet even its pinkness is implicated in my desire for Kirchner.

I did like one bit of this blue after all, even though this frieze-band wasn't at all the Puvis premise I set about.

Here's what I looked at, and how I thought to operate it.

My desire for Kirchner: for Kirchner paintings, for the paintings (Klimt, mostly, and Schiele) that I saw at the Neue Galerie in New York, and even to make, myself, paintings that participate as strongly in the lushness I find here as the Circus paintings of Grotjahn participate in the lushness of Vienna, of Klimt.

But perhaps most intensely--and, and perhaps not incidentally, most immaterial--of all, it is Fraser Brough's citation of Kirchner for a Raphael Egil text that precipitates this desire of mine.

"Egil has said that he loves the rhyming in paint of the white bodies of the women in his versions of Cézanne's Bathers with the white lines of the mountainous landscape he has taken from Kirchner's woodcut Der Baum (1920). It is a curious rhyme. The version of Cézanne's Bathers that Egil has repeatedly transcribed here (which was for a long time owned by Henri Matisse), is a work that is primarily about the act of touching, intimacy, Cézanne's simultaneous desire and incapacity for it, his anxiety and his lust. It is a picture that luxuriates in the thought of naked female bodies in nature, but in which no actual touching can be discerned - intimacy breaks down every time you think it is getting close. It is a picture about longing for things outside the self but which consistently fails to connect with them. Kirchner's Der Baum, on the other hand, transcriptions of which also abound in this show, was made at a moment when the artist, recovering in the mountains from morphine addiction, was throwing himself into the natural world, finding solace and support in the landscape, the exterior, where previously he had searched only in himself. He is succeeding in the very thing Cézanne is here failing at. In Kirchner's woodcut, one almost doesn't notice the two figures walking, so completely are they integrated into the line structure, into the all-encompassing glory of the mountains. / Another rhyme repeated in these works is in the relationship between the changing blue sky in Egil's Bathers and the haunting blue tree that appears again and again throughout this exhibition, and which was sourced from another Kirchner work, Der Blaue Baum (1920). It is the loop which joins up the spiral. In the Kirchner painting we see a forest at night, dark and haunting apart from a bright blue tree that is glowing in the middle of the picture, and which Egil has described as being an image of the artist's inner existence. The sky behind these bathers is shifting constantly, looming and receding in its shades of blue just like Kirchner's tree. Is that sky its conceptual and painterly opposite, an image of the changing, external world? / In Landschaftsbild I, Egil has said that he set out to make a landscape painting in which the sky doesn't serve as the receding background, but rather is the picture's focal point, set right at the front. This formal manoeuvre has here, poetically, and quite unintentionally, become another haunting blue tree, the blue tree of Kirchner's Der Blaue Baum. And in Ohne Titel, we see a patch of blue that began as a blue tree in an earlier painting, one now covered over with a white sky that is heavy with its memory, and where it now seems caught in an unending spiral between flat square and blooming sphere. This type of shifting ground, where the formal becomes the evocative, the academic becomes the prosaic, is perhaps where the magic of this exhibition's spiral can be sensed most strongly."

I've been thinking lately of a certain idea of quality in art, an idea which is at least powerfully situated today, and may even be utterly dominant; I associate the idea with Diva Corp's values, and with an image of a game of tennis, where an exhibition, or a painting, or an aesthetic statement is to be considered as a stroke of the racquet: it's on the fly, it's in the high-speed cut of the moment, its possibility is, most of all, contingent on the constitution of a scene as an effective sort of just such an exchange. I once went so far as to try to put my talents, whatever they may be, in service of this vision, writing to an Artillery editor about Nikki Ochoa at Paramount Artcraft, "I think it's a beautifully scrappy and compact treatment of grief, domesticity, and memory, very moving without being precious in the slightest …. When I saw Nikki's show, I thought it would align well with the spirit I've gathered from Artillery recently: to me, it seems like a perfect example of the kind of art that these two recent articles call for ("Less than Zero" and "Alternative Spaces")."

Now, however, this model seems to succumb, on closer inspection, to the logic of fashion. It could be damned as a vision of the thorough spectacularization, such as it is possible, of a physical art scene (not that L.A.'s wasn't already compromised, etc.). Talking to Francisco, I managed to articulate that the reason Picabia doesn't register with me as a great artist is because, if the major component of his œuvre is his working of personality to repeatedly destruct expectations of beauty in whatever form they iteratively recuperate, he loses the bulk of his painterly relevance as soon as each moment passes. Talking to Will's Aidan about my taste, and not knowing whether he'd take it as a slight against his own just stated (and consummately slightable) taste ("Richard Prince, Damien Hirst, David Hammons"), I said that what I seek is art whose quality is not so contingent upon its immediate context, not just a matter of making the gesture which, in the hyperspecificity of its context, constitutes the biggest "fuck you" (the biggest possible "fuck you" to the context itself (not just in it). To the obvious reply, that all gestures are to some extent context-dependent, I responded that some art is more context-dependent than others. I was trying to silence the negative judgment this statement contains; I think I succeeded.

Now I am going to read Adorno's Aesthetic Theory because I think that it lays out the logic whereby what is good in the tennis conception of art is differentiated from what is bad.

[Appended the following day, 23 July 2025: I've been looking more closely at the stances & project of Caesura, and I found in their "About Us" page, a sort of manifesto, the following passage which reproduces precisely my attitude above, and happens (though this is probably no coincidence at all) to land on the quintessential re-Symbolist note: "Contemporary art, which has dominated artistic practice for fifty years or more, adheres to a concept of the contemporary which obliterates the shape of history and demands the strictest currency as the criterion of art's success. Like fashion, it has come to be distinguished by the marvelous arbitrary ascents and subsequent ridiculous falls that churn and cycle through art's fortune, trend after trend, season after season. Each and every moment is compelled to find its style and is extinguished in a bright and empty glimmer that leaves one wondering, much like Gauguin long ago: Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?"]

I kind of like the idea of “puttiphallus” as the title for an exhibition of paintings, all of which but one (the largest, an unforgettable image, unforgettably painted with baroque adornment that nonetheless doesn’t fail to sensitize its baroque heights with stretches of spareness, that unforgettable image I mentioned, the serpentine uncle) assist the titular sign, on which I will not offer comment unless in the form of overwhelming textual profusion (everything, summa pictorica, eccentered accretions of notes)

A puttiphallus Bacon-offcenter in my latest (knifed) armature, puttiphallus under the sign (thick impasto mark) of the globus cruciger, and a scrawled one under a more Egil-volumized sphere-circle (flickering) globus (a real frisson in that skin-crystal or -glass contact, esp. with the weight and temperature palpable in the contact)

23 July 2025

Yesterday I came back to Sean Tatol’s Jasper Johns piece, for the third time. It is not just precious to me for that it is the closest thing (together with his Rafael Delacruz reviews, which are much shorter and less substantial) to a major-keyed, positive exposition of the way success works in his aesthetic, but, much more, it is a very clear and explicit and concise statement of the vein of painting (painterly: non-pop, non-minimalist, durable, delicate, and perhaps most essentially anti-expressionist) in which I come the closest to being able to situate myself.

My words are not flowing, but of particular note are

(1) the fact that I come to see that my borrowings, e.g. of certain figures and figure-details from the drawings of Pontormo, which I value precisely because they are registrations of an apperception of quality or grace that is safely distinct from questions of iconicity (in other words, because my borrowings are not identifiable as canonical icons, they have no iconicity; this makes their true value visible; this means that how they look to other people is, quite deliberately, how they look to me, which would not be the case if I were reading unconventional value into a well-worn image, a separate practice which is nonetheless integral to a productive connoisseurship but which does not work for my painting in a way that I need it to) (an apperception that is, precisely for that, perhaps recognizable as my own, cultivated by me on an ongoing basis and with traceable inextricable-rootedness in a Proustian-active personal history) (and I have, I think, stated this before), are both distinct from Johns’s own image-sourcings and can (or, at least if they get better, could) be seen to succeed in a comparable way, (for starters) avoiding the bulk of the pitfalls whose avoidance is the main substance behind the genius-frisson of Johns’s sourcings; and

(2) a particular phrase, “Crucially, though, a distinct sensibility is not an inborn fact of individuality, it is something that is built, and that building is traditionally done through the

development of a technical craft. A good painter hones their perceptions by returning again and again to the act of painting, a process that continually deepens and broadens their sense of engagement," which came to me yesterday and echoes with me again, today, while painting, as an invaluable consolation, a cause, even, for faith, a source of support while I continue to turn out paintings the majority of which are substantially disappointing (in a way that really affects me, can make me distraught for half a day and glum for three days or more, just for a single painting), hope couched in that particular process, whose proto-quickenings I can even begin to feel, of refinement.

I've been poking around Caesura; there was a Raoul de Keyser review there, written by a painter who really has a great grasp of the terms of painting such as I see them too (such, also, as Tatol sets them up in his "Jasper Johns"), boiling down to "[de Keyser] subjected himself to these conditions and historically laden materials. He worked as a hand habituated by an education in painting, and an eye informed by great works of the past — with a refined sense of when harmony is reached, when just enough is enough."

For some reason, coming off of this (supported) thought of de Keyser, I felt free to tear some squarish pieces of palette paper and paste them onto a dollar store canvas and an aluminum scrap. Extreme care, it need hardly be said, was taken in the selection of passages, the delimitation and direction of their borders, the size and orientation of the chosen supports on hand, and the arrangement of the marks (having innumerable distinctive qualities and internal relations, only some of which are fixed in the relative readymade of this kind of collage) in the new surface-space. Then I added a few more marks, whose need I felt, and for the feeling of this need I mustered all of my painterly-optic sense. The work was maybe an hour or two; the decision-faculty just about drained me completely, as it almost always does. I'm still desperate for a way of painting that doesn't involve this drain. Buchloh's description of Ryman, and most descriptions of Grotjahn, maintain my suspicion that such a mode (with unalienated labor, without the need to constantly summon all of one's faculty of plastic and optic and dialectical-moment judgment) is still possible.*

[* Tatol on Johns might point out how this can be possible for me, too: "Duchamp's avoidance of repetition boxed him into a corner because repetition is unavoidable, and this is exactly what Johns inverts, an emphasis on repetition that leads to freedom. … His repetitions are not concerned with the meaning of the thing shown, but with the usage of the thing towards the end of painting itself, the success or failure of the painting as a painting. An American flag on an orange ground, an American flag in complementary colors, or a series of American flags stacked on each other are not a revisitation to the meaning of the American flag, they reuse the flag as a means of creating paintings. The flags are not so much a subject as they are a method for Johns to negate his self-expression, for him to paint while avoiding as much as possible the necessity of invention. However, this negation is not at all inexpressive because it pointedly expresses his sensibility, his aversion to expression." So is the intermediate step of establishing expression-aversion as a definitive personal trait the only way to gain valid access to repetition? It's not the only way, of course; minimalism and pop, for starters, are two radically different

routes on hand, and Grotjahn and Guyton continue to show new ways to lock repetition into their styles as aesthetically successful. I still think that a possible route of my own is the way of looking at Pontormo drawings that I've cultivated--which is not necessarily limited to Pontormo, but which I ought to take care not to abuse, because its preservation (esp. the preservation of its legibility).]

[One more cf. on the desire, and the invention of various means of attainment, of avoidance of a certain kind of labor that doesn't feel right: Here is a statement by Maggie Friedman from an interview with the L.A.-based Caesura writer Grant Edward Tyler. "It came from the most fundamental painting problem question, which is what do you paint? I wanted to not have to come up with that every single time. It's exhausting to constantly be considering that and anyways anything I could come up with is really just an amalgamation of influences so I'd rather just make that explicit."

Three days ago I had been so strongly moved by admiration for one of these passages that I took the following picture, but, at the time, this was the only release I could get for this desire.

I wonder if I shouldn't have called "re-Symbolism" "re-formalism" all along, radicalizing the premises of formalist painting by sublating all--every variable--that historical formalisms sought to exclude into the structure of formalism itself. Making every such variable into a dimension that may or may not be sensitized, given that sensitization of any dimension entails the obligation to bring the work into tensed harmony along that dimension.

It made me happy when I felt, for a moment, that now I have secured (by hard work and desperately thorough and absurdly sustained searching) frames through which I can pursue at least three not-disconnected but very importantly separated kinds of painting: geometrically-constructed abstraction (through my armatures); tradition-based figure-forms (through copie, esp. of Pontormo); and point-of-view "real space" (post-Impressionist space, say, even if limited to one view: that of my wall).

24 July 2025

Yesterday I read this, about one of the few Klossowski things I haven't read yet, in Tatol's Paul McCarthy and the Negative Sublime: "In Sade mon prochian Pierre Klossowski tentatively posits Sade as a theist in spite of himself, someone so driven towards the repudiation of God's existence that he becomes the ultimate believer, the surest proof of God by his inability to drive God away. Like the physical prisons he spent most of his life in, no matter how he shakes his fist and rattles the bars, his rage against God can never liberate him. His scatologies and transgressions are made in opposition to God and are thereby given meaning by the existence of God. He pulls on an unbreakable finger trap that tightens infinitely against the absurd intensity of his struggling."

It made me think that if I assembled a vast corpus under the heading "Anything but Painting"--including (with that as a subtitle) my "oscillatory work" and my "summa pictorica," the Klee-Rilke puppet-ghosts and perruque bricolages of stretcher bar, etc.--then it would be the most compelling depiction (in the negative) of painting that I'm capable of. Which is still not to say that it would be painting. And also it would be to concede failure (what all signs point to) on my one single-minded intention--painting--and I am not quite ready to do that, despite the recent succession of immensely painful days spent trying to paint (yesterday just the latest and most spastic among them).

24 July 2025

This early line from Deleuze Difference and Repetition locks eerily perfectly into place for the Pontormo serpentine-with-beard that I still believe I will paint. "Remember the song of Ariadne from the mouth of the old Sorcerer: here, two masks are superimposed - that of a young woman, almost of a Kore, which has just been laid over the mask of a repugnant old man. The actor must play the role of an old man playing the role of the Kore."

[Here is a bit of a fuller context, he's doing something with Nietzsche: "Zarathustra is conceived entirely within philosophy, but also entirely for the stage. Everything in it is scored and visualised, put in motion and made to walk or dance. How can it be read without searching for the exact sound of the cries of the higher man, how can the prologue be read without staging the episode of the tightrope walker which opens the whole story? At certain moments, it is a comic opera about terrible things; and it is not by chance that Nietzsche speaks of the comic character of the Overman. Remember the song of Ariadne from the mouth of the old Sorcerer: here, two masks are superimposed - that of a young woman, almost of a Kore, which has just been laid over the mask of a repugnant old man. The actor must play the role of an old man playing the role of the Kore. Here too, for Nietzsche, it is a matter of filling the inner emptiness of the mask within a theatrical space: by multiplying the superimposed masks and inscribing the omnipresence of Dionysus in that superimposition, by inserting both the infinity of real movement and the form of the absolute difference given in the repetition of eternal return."]

I need to revisit the two essays in the CAPC Michael Krebber catalogue, particularly the second one (though the first was a clearer plan of his œuvre), particularly for its bizarre citations of a "Palo Alto school" (of psychophilosophy?) and René Girard, and for its bibliography of a certain substrain of Artforum and Texte zur Kunst articles which I think will be illuminating for me unto this whole loosely-associated thing that has moved from Cologne to elsewhere to Frankfurt's Städelschule, as it seems, not just Krebber Kippenberger and Oehlen but also Strau, von Bonin, von Heyl, and Koether. I've long been trying to crack the question of what Greene Naftali was, what happened, and what it is now; if this illuminates, along the way, Buchholz and what happens at Gaga Reena Spaulings, then that will be a bonus.

Mind full of Krebber and other Cologne affiliates, I append to my posited book the title "weaponized incompetence," adjust the "summa pictorica" one to read (one "and" in the series of "or"s) "and it would be Summa Pictorica if I were to indulge in irony, but I do not have this luxury," and add another, "Failsafe, should the paintings miss," to be clear that it is not art but still has a specific relation to my art, like any would-be artist's personal facts, bearing upon but extraneous to the sincere attempt to make good paintings (sincere and, in that, for me, uniquely possible: As I always say, it was perfectly possible to make good paintings without going to all this trouble, but the odds would have been extremely low, and I can't afford to leave it to luck, so this was for me the only possible thing to do; and it is thus the real mark of my contemporaneity, because I would not have had to go to precisely these lengths, take precisely these measures, were I to be sited with any other history-moment)

I struggled, in my own head, for a couple hours (ringing familiar to my desire to have the particular humor I found in Grotjahn or in any number of other places (Duchamp, Finnegans Wake, Molly Rose Lieberman, Lukas Quietzsch …)), and finally came to the somewhat obvious conclusion that I can't engage in the post-Krebber conversation on its own terms—among countless pitfalls (the most prohibitive being the simple logical one that Tatol laid out), that would be to do the worst kind of tennis-type art (see recent note). Instead, I need to find my own ways to reproduce its strengths: Krebber's contemporary take on the dandy; the dialectical negativity of the whole school, which I would replicate only with a much broader horizon (historical and ambition-wise); the spirit of Strau's Ulysses stones (which I need to look at again); the networked factor (which, again, is sublated by me successfully only if I pull of just the right relation between my thinking-writing and my paintings—more specifically, only if the comically incongruous immensity (which can only be sincere-ironic in its absurdity) of my compensatory logorrhea (avoidance tactics piling upon slow-learnership) contains, in its own necessitation, an adequate response to the networked factor (how it could probably have all been avoided if I had a legitimate personal social context, how so much of what I did would not have been necessary without networked situation because it would not have been possible without networked situation, etc).

Having been stuck in an unproductive short-circuiting hyperrationality (unable to drop trains of thought at the requisite frequency), blocked painting, stuck, disgusted with myself even, for three or four days, it was the thought and the image of the paintings of Lukas Quietzsch that washed over me with a consolation so welcome as to have heralded the true end of this overheated spell, a consolation such as I have rarely known so completely from paintings, though Molly Rose Lieberman's might have done the same, on a few occasions, and others too (Grotjahn, Martinez, even Wood, maybe), but these others not without some at least intermittent sense of reservation.

Scam Likely and Parallel Warnings in Simple Arrangements, in particular.

Even the thought of the OED, triggered by this painting which likely had nothing to do with the dictionary, the thought of the OED itself, even if that is a thought not unlike how sentence

diagramming must have felt in the mind of Helen Marten, channeled into me an immense sense of possibility for paintings, a sense that I can draw in the same rhythm (but not at all in the same manner) as him and that this would be enough, the thought that I have good ideas akin to the ones that remain palpable in his paintings and that I can even put mine into paintings, that there is still a hand out there for me as good and as perfect as his pastel or staining technique.

25 July 2025

The main issue, as this "Greenberg's Kant" article has shown me, is what status the conditions of medium specificity (delimited flatness) have in my schema of general aesthetic quality (tensed balance of all sensitized dimensions). Ought I abandon medium specificity as a condition and sublate its constraints as yet more sensitizable dimensions? Or are they already sensitizable dimensions, and in fact always sensitized whenever the object in question is a painting? The stakes of this dilemma is, precisely, Fried's theatricality (the transgression of medium bounds, which to him is the degeneration of the arts).

I need to add a note at the start of my "re-Symbolism" line that the label makes reference strictly to Symbolism and not symbolism, It is thus an ironic choice of label, and appealing to me for the nugatory humor therein, because it inherits all the weakness of "Symbolism" itself, such a misnomer, the most misleading misleading label for its own referent (Symbolism was the awakening from symbolism, which is to say the awakening of modernism; the coming into consciousness that the processes of meaning (and therefore of symbolism) are, if not arbitrary, then at least plastic, workable, operationalizable, which was the first great step of the coming into self-consciousness of art (modernism in art—this is the only real meaning that can be confidently read into the label "modernism" in all its many uses).

"Re-formalism," another suitable choice, works in much the same way.

26 July 2025

I don't mean to write down "the idea" I just "had," because on the one hand it is too important and on the other it can't be written down. I just mean to record in as much detail as possible the contour of "square hole" it matches up with, because this contour is so detailed and extensive that I think it's at risk of slipping away at least in part, even large parts, because it's so

multifarious; but the more I retain of it the better off I am, because in a way to move ever along and into this coastline (it's fractal, as with all real borders) is the motor-running of a painting practice, the very momentum and dynamism of it, the territory coming in from the horizon to meet the point-of-view.

All I'll record of the idea itself is the extremely minimal version of it that I used to show it to Bella, out of an overcoming joy (joy that was tearful in nature, but I dispelled the gravity by exaggerating the trappings of such a moment into clichés in order to be able to smile and laugh: "it's unbelievable how wide I've cracked it open,"* "finally a prism through which I can refract everything," "a frame, a device, that makes all that I've managed to gather so far possible whereas before it was just present but choked," "whereas before I could not proceed because it felt so stupid that my paintings should each begin by staring at copiously scrolling screens and waiting for two or more thoughts to bounce off of each other," etc.

[* This phrase is a variant--an exaggeration into even more, more legitimate, humor--of the one I said aloud this same time last week, when the "idea" was really just an evanescent sense of painterly space or of the state of painting relating to Adorno and de Keyser; I knew how qualified and ephemeral the sense of freedom in there was, in fact this was the first thing I was aware of, but I thought that the sense itself could be maintained despite or even because of that; but it turned out to be too hard, to problematize too much, and from thence flowed my entire excruciating week (see the dross--not all of it actually useless--that it generated, above) in which everything was put into question, excruciating even by the standards of my own painting weeks, excruciating to such an extent that I had to tell my parents about it, had to pass on the line about how work can be a relief (a thought both depressing and genuinely consolatory) because it is at least no less productive than a day like so, and I at least get a hundred bucks.]

Here is the version I gave to Bella: Just that a seam such as this can be a vertical such as these.

Sufficiently clear, I think, even in just this statement, is one simple fact about what this does: my perruque-bricolage which has been occupying me at work, in all my "shop hours" and lunches for about a month, has thus far been purely self-propelled by the frisson of perruque-bricolage per se (which is, approximately, what made me remark with simple irony-sincerity to Theo that it was more fun than painting; what this remark mainly accomplished was to problematize in a very specific way whether what I was doing wasn't painting, whether fun is what's germane, etc.), completely untethered to and cut off from what I was chipping away at at home, which was, still, more or less, seeking after the standard that that little Pink Angels panel still represented (still not having been surpassed) (in which two things could be, because they were, if only so far in that one painting, done at once: All sensitized dimensions were tensile-balanced;

and, the painterly (painting-historical and paintcraft-material) passions which bubbled over in me, in that moment, were all exorcised into literary-material (object-)reality). Now, those two work-worlds can be one, and, even more importantly, the single important "process" in which I will be engaged will be integrally threaded between them, so that it will no matter be a question of interruption but rather of short-term bottlenecking whose management is reminiscent of the craft (a matter of timings and impulses, wheelings and dealings, such as Certeau laid out at painful length in at least the first half of Practice of Everyday Life) of the alchemist.

The only things I said to her about why this changes everything about what is possible for me--the first two aspects of the contour of the coastline (the coastline being the negative image of the sea, or vice versa), that is--were these: Twofold, and both a matter of Hantaï: First, that it is firmly Hantaïan in that it is primarily a matter of the sides of the painter's craft which he made to be the foremost: the craftsman ones in the laborer sense of craftsman, the stretching and the stapling, the things done with eyes closed (see the aspect about what I found unworkable in painting recently, too much open-eye full-body-and-mind appraisal), like ironing (ironing: To unalienate this labor is precisely the allure of the Ryman thought that I've had on the tips of my tongue / fingers for a week now; perhaps it is the fact that I've been constantly about to mark it down, and therefore repeatedly gathering it up to the front of my mind, that made today's moment possible). Second: That, because it wouldn't really make sense for the seam-paste to be anything but gesso, nor for the gesso to be anything but straight white, this new process subtly (but ineluctably, simply and perfectly, so simple that it can and must be missed) repeats the Matisse-cutout activating-white interiorization-of-borders of the Etudes and Meuns and Tabulas (in the only way that it can be repeated, i.e. differently; Deleuze showed that all repetition, properly named, is shot through with difference in just this way; otherwise it would not be repetition but generality, le pire).

[Both these images are from my thesis presentation.]

Of course, as with any process, the success of each painting is anything but guaranteed. Quality is utterly contingent upon the painting's successful carrying forth, to fruition, to term, each time anew.

The most important thing is how capacious this is.

More of the texture of that contour, the specificity of the arabesque of the line which is never able to be drawn but only able to be known from the perspective of either of the two fields which it constitutes (which reach out toward it as toward a horizon but approach it asymptotically--that is why it is fractal): I.e., more of the things that were loose-end-sensitized, more or less active or ranklingly baggaged in my painting-head, which find their Mallarméan-locking fulfillment in this:

Perhaps Ryman merits the prominence of first place here--not just Ryman, but my Ryman (the drawing of his that filled my head when I started that one painting--see just below--which did not fail but whose success, like all of my recent relative successes, was qualified by its lack of fruitfulness), and also Bois's de Duve's Ryman ("Thierry de Duve, assuming the relative irreproducibility of Ryman's paintings, clarifies some theoretical connections between them and photography and speaks about what there is of the auratic in them that is resistant to it. ("Ryman irréproductible," Parachute, no. 20 [Fall 1980], 18-27)"), and also Buchloh's Ryman (see below notes from Formalism and Historicity) (which is perhaps most notable for its possibility-impossibility, i.e. for the flickering-suspended status that Ryman acquires by the end of Buchloh's essay, a status inalienable from painting and, if made newly palpable, uniquely delicious, characteristic of all authentic aesthetic experience (this language isn't quite right), even to art as Adorno's Aesthetic Theory leaves it).
Here is the Ryman drawing mentioned in the paragraph above, that I looked at when I started my first Flashe painting that was a failure (because of the Flashe, its deadness on the aluminum) that I then saved by painting over it in oil.

And here are the mentions of Ryman by Buchloh in Formalism and Historicity that came to me as so loaded with a particular way of looking at painting with so much traction for me--it is how I've tried and not often succeeded to look at Grotjahn, and it is, I think, the only way of looking through which I can achieve a sense of magnificence even from within the Eden of unalienated labor: "Apart from Robert Ryman--whose work Buren admired and collected at an early moment--very few artists had in fact singularized the elements of painting to the degree that Stella had in the late Fifties and early Sixties" (51). "It is precisely this systematic differentiation of the constituent elements of painting that makes Toroni's work central to the elaboration of a painterly aesthetic after Ryman and Stella in Europe: singularization of the brushstroke, separation of imprint from distribution, hinging the indexical mark in the gridded space of the surface, are all strategies of a radical painterly deconstruction that remind us also once again of comparable attitudes developed by Manzoni and Brown. The problem of (non-)composition--having been among the prime concerns of American painting since Ellsworth Kelly and Stella--is equally addressed by Toroni in yet another way that is similar to the solutions worked out by the Minimalists. Abolishing the problem of composition by replacing perceptual principles of spatial order with conceptual principles of distribution, is precisely what Judd had decided when he used mathematical series to structure and position the spatial and material quantities of his work" (66). This next mention, actually, is a site at which I'd diverge from Ryman significantly: "It is precisely the tradition of that discovery of the inherent chromatic value of all objects and materials that links the Constructivist and Duchamp's readymade position—all readymades are in fact monochrome objects--with a contemporary painterly practice such as the one of Robert Ryman which in fact synthesizes the chromatics of the readymade with that of the monochrome. Arguing for such an understanding of color as an inherent and specific quality of materials, he speaks about the chromatic values of his surfaces: 'Always the surface is used. The gray of the

steel comes through; the brown of the corrugated paper comes through; the linen comes through; the cotton which is not the same as the paint—it seems white-all of those things are consid-ered. It's really not monochrome painting at all. The white just happened because it's a paint and it doesn't interfere'" (339). Here Hantaï is obviously very present, apparently disconnected from the Soviet conversation but so attentive to Duchamp and in any case getting to the scriptural most closely via the armature of the mass in Ecriture rose rather than either of the mentioned options here: "... when it comes to mechanical mark-making processes that displaced the conventional forms of drawing, for example, Manzoni's and Ryman's works of the late 1950s are as profoundly implicated in a historical dialogue with the analytical laboratory positions in Russian and Soviet Constructivism (e.g., Rodchenko's compass and ruler drawings in 1919, or even earlier, Duchamp's Three Standard Stoppages from 1913) as they depended upon, as Ryman claims, his admiration for the work of Mark Rothko (or Barnett Newman, for that matter). The athletic calligraphy of the New York School (as Robert Rosenblum once called it was now transformed into the scriptural, the repetitive, the molecular movement of the brush, increasingly scrutinized and objectified" (351). "Comparable to his more visible peer Stella, Ryman serialized the brush marks in his paintings already in the late 1950s, by stacking them up mechanically, as it were, almost identical in size (width, length, and quantity of pigment applied). Yet their minuscule variations made them still legible as brushstrokes, not as the mere mechanical painterly imprints they would become in the work of Niele Toroni ten years later. / More importantly, however, in one of Ryman's paintings from 1961, a column of horizontal, fairly equalized brush marks suddenly turns into a stack of signatures toward the bottom of the painting. Thus Ryman performs in his work what will become a crucial feature in Toroni's as well: the dialectics of facture, operating in perpetual suspense between a gesture of transcendentality and the functions of a trademark that guarantees authenticity like the signature itself. In his discussion of Malevich's work, Yve-Alain Bois has brilliantly described this dialectic: 'Facture, in terms of painterly touch, is only a substitute for the signature of the artist (this is now no longer a body that acts, but it is a spirit) and it becomes the guarantee of the "authenticity" of the painting: caught in a movement that is both transcendental and commercial, textural facture remains the object of a profound ambiguity.'" (352). At the end there, I see what I often talk about--the Viennese or Klimtian lushness that Grotajhn injected into Circus circus and that Justin Caguiat has become so associated with, the lushness whose simply voluntary but crucially non-mechanical reproducibility is one of the primary focuses of my painting such as I see it. Continuing immediately thereupon: "Ryman develops a wide range of factural devices; his brushstrokes are differentiated by length and width, by quantity and pigment charge, and by the directions of arm and hand movement. Thus he opens an entirely new realm of infinite aestheticization of the once goal-oriented "laboratory" investigation of the basic pictorial elements of pictorial language (subjecting it thus inevitably to the fetishization that this process of infinite aesthetic variation implies)" (352 - 353). "The idealist notion of opticality prevents Fried from recognizing the inherently dialectical quality of tactility embodied in the indexical, singularized structure: that it functions simultaneously as the pure trace of a process and as a sign originating in the materiality of painterly production. / But it is not until Ryman's and Toroni's work that the dialectic of process and pictorial sign will appear most programmatically, as though it was performed in a laboratory experiment. And it is only in their work that the analytical approach to facture's indexicality and singularity now manifestly constitutes painting as the outcome of a complex interaction between multiple factors and forces: between tool,

material, and surface, between procedure and gesture, suspended between the trace of matter and the trace of bodily performance all are displayed now with an exemplary transparency. In the development of this logic from Ryman's to Toroni's work between 1958 and 1968, the indexical brush mark becomes not only increasingly isolated and regularized but also increasingly systematical: size and placement now become the subject of rigorous serial repetition rather than merely aim at an approximate regularity. Furthermore, what distinguishes Toroni's work from the early work of Ryman and Stella is the emphatic limitation to the individual brush mark as the smallest, repeatable, identical module of painterly operation while maintaining at the same time a margin of chromatic variation within a rigorously fixed format of composition, chroma, and facture" (360). Then he begins tracing a problematic of "non-relational composition," whose stakes are threaded through my vision of painting but whose bottom-line or telos is quite foreign to my own: The players are the same, the endgame is quite orthogonal. And after that comes Buchloh's acrobatics around questions of historicity and aestheticization, which I am less interested in, for now, though it will eventually merit full engagement.

Back to my "idea" about "process":

The most important thing, as I've said, is how capacious this "process" is (not quite a "process" but just a "méthode" in the same sense in which pliage was): i.e., that it is open to everything, that everything that I wanted to do can be done in it. Is it only in the fold of the wave of the intoxication of this moment that this possibility is real? I've been holding back from making notes of each of the instant-flashes of notions of what can be done, because I fear that each of these routes forward would then immediately ossify (because the note would look cold and empty by comparison to the instant-flash itself, etc.). But I really think that it really is open.

The exhilaration comes from a certain qualia in the feeling of the idea of this process: This is what distinguishes it from any operational idea I've had before: None of the others were solid, or, better, operational, enough to be pushed against. None of the others were existent, sufficiently there, to be able to provide any resistance to whatever pressure I could exert. They buckled because I didn't believe in them enough. They evaporated into blank surface, and the blank surface kept overwhelming me.

That's why I really think that it really is open: Because it will retain its specificity even while everything else is slammed into it (even when anything else is superposed).

So, after Ryman, some more of the aspects of this coastline (some more of the things sensitized in my head that make this idea arrive to me as perfect, or, better, because more simply, just: things I've been working over in my head with which this idea seems to strike perfect resonance) (Already I feel my words slowing, doubling, becoming clumsy--I better cut off before my own scent starts to be palpable in this amazingly open space I just learned it's possible to step into):

Hantaï's pliage effectively "spaced out" (in the temporal dimension; as a scansion) the coming-into-being of each individual painting in a way of which I was always envious. Since my idea achieves this same, I think it will fix the problem I've had, the problem of overwhelming demand of full haptic-optic sensitivity at every moment--since there was no rhythmic scansion to it (in the way in which I've been trying to paint recently), no interval-ing of the painterly stare, I could not help but get sucked into an acceleration-repetition of the demand for it which quickly underwent a microphone-feedback-type effect and immediately burned me out. That was why my labor felt so alienated recently, why, despite my obvious indisposition to such grounds for repulsion ("hard" is precisely of the essence, integral to what I or any real artist must seek), I

found myself forced to admit that the painting I was trying to practice was “too hard” (by which I really mean I wasn’t suited to the particular character of its particular openness; like Herrigel before Rivette (see above) I didn’t have authority for too many of the decisions; it violated the demand that a truly free person align proper challenges with proper competencies, etc.).

Between seam-moments--at any point, that is, between any of the (copiously repeatable, unto Richterian baroque space)--the canvas can be fully spread out and a form, a tracing, or an image imposed. This fact makes good on the impulse that was only partially realized in these (extremely recent: these two, it so happens, are the ones I was working on today, in the earlier morning, before I sat in a chair and stared for about an hour (Bella has recently laughed at and kissed me for doing this; that time, it was after reading several Rilke poems late one night) and then “had” this “idea”) paintings:

That impulse, in turn, had its real vision trained on a painting like this Grotjahn or like another Grotjahn that I couldn’t find just now or, perhaps, Oehlen-space, etc.:

But, behind the Grotjahn, the true import of the spreading-out of the canvas and the imprinting of a form or tracing (after some seams, before others) is that I will be able to realize localized painting-effects like the one which I see to animate this Matisse: The blue circle and the yellow circle can be free-hand brushed in, perhaps spanning preexistent seams, in order to balance out such a presence as the yellow rectangle at right, which I can see in this hypothetical as representing something constituted from out of verticals--from, that is, the type of operation that I was considering when I “had” this “idea”: That I can ruler-in two straight lines, paint in a barcode-type (Ryman-type, Grotjahn-type) sequence of colors in roughly parallel roughly straight taches perpendicular to the ruled-in lines, and then, after that, make a seam along each ruled-in line, gessoing up to the strip of color from each side. If this was done on its own, it would be a rather lame redo of Newman’s zips; but, put into an armature-type structure (intermediately capped with hand-drawn, swinging-wrist or swinging-arm (as the case may be: It is important, to me, how scale-independent this “idea” is) ellipses), it is a different matter entirely: It does not reduce painterly space to one dimension, as I took that Irwin “sentence” work at LACMA to do; it doesn’t reduce the two continuous dimensions to two discrete dimensions, either, like all of the subsequent dilutions of Mondrian’s problematic (Kelly’s and

Richter's grids, etc., aleatory-conceptual novelty notwithstanding) did; it keeps all the important dimensions of painterly space wide open.

By "seams" I mean the gesso-edge re-stretched to fall anywhere on the "surface" such as the final stretch delimits that surface. I don't mean an actual fabric seam; this prospect is on the distant horizon; it's subtle but latent in Quietzsch, but I don't think it finds full treatment there, i.e. doesn't justify its presence, doesn't fully make good on its potentialities, there. In other words that is not a dimension of play that I will sensitize until I have more to do with it, more of an end toward which to operationalize it, a new balance to be superposed into-onto the other balances that I must attain first.

I mentioned above some very imperfect stand-ins of what may be made to go between gesso-seams ("barcode-type (Ryman-type, Grotjahn-type)"). What I meant, primarily, is contained in the space that these examples, if properly operationalized, could be seen to span:

[These sequentialize Viennese color-chords, and then superpose the sequentialization onto the mask armature; at least I suppose that is an approximation of the kind of thought that passes through Grotjahn's head at some point in his process, as evidenced jointly by Peter's information that the dimensions of his currently in-progress works are sourced from Rothkos, on the one hand, and on the other the fact that one of his "French" masks was titled with a reference to a van Gogh painting whose palette it kind of digested and reproduced without spatializing the mimesis. The appeal of such a "sequentialization" has to do with a way in which it de-alienates the labor; this was archetypically accomplished by Ryman's strokes which, de Duve says, perform some kind of conjugation of all the organic possibilities of a brushstroke ------ this is a clumsy half-restatement of something I tried to say above.]

But, between the seams, I will reproduce things that are not reducible to sequentializations (barcodifications) of color chords. I can perfectly distill, in that format, what I want to distill from this Cézanne, which has everything to do with the texture of the paint in the green stretch, but is indissociable from the reds and yellows:

My perruque-bricolage alerted me to many possibilities that I want to take more time and thought to reproduce to greater effect. Foremost was this discrete drip-track which crossed a stretcher-edge in relation to which it had a 45-degree angle; I love this, and want to do much more with it; it reminds me of Randy Wray and especially Mitchell Kehe but I think I can do other, different things with it, my own things.

Countless other noticings from out of this work, with a similar character, which I can similarly identify, and turn into a sequence of Hantaïesque process-instructions in a calmer moment, at home; and bring these instructions to work with my canvases that (in unstretched form) I'll now always be toting between home and work, to work on at lunch, to spend long periods of time at home while I wait for their oil paint strips to dry before ending up right under the edge of a "key panel" plywood scrap, pressed against the sawhorses outside, accumulating a patina of marks, indentations, gesso-drips, dirt-stains, etc. which will impart to them a character proper to them, as did Hantaï's footprints and eventually his burials and mold-farmings to his work.

What is to become of so many half-started paintings? These, right here, are to be frozen in time, because they speak eloquently to the things I was failing to fully achieve in them, the things that in the new paintings are so much more immediately and better attainable:

The last one, above, together with the other one on which I pasted palette paper, speaks to the most acute point of the oppressive too-openness that sparked the week-long crisis that met its punctuation in “this” “idea.”

The first one in the group above also has this attribute “NUOVA,” which I immediately loved, and which, under the new méthode, is the prime archetype of the kind of patina-mark that I want my paintings to accrue--and, because of the new status that my marks will have herein, they are free to do so, just as they can even be free, at times, to register canvas grain, because now, as marks, they are (something like) “reified” rather than struggling to live in a perfect Eyckian immaterial space.

This painting was talismanic for (even while being sandbagged by its photo-derived character, to which the grid bears acute witness) its initiation of the blank-space painting-stand-in, wall-and-window (and ceiling and floor and table and chair and light and printouts and printer and Ludovic’s armoire), tableau allégorique de lui-même series; perfectly, that series does not close now, it’s only just getting started: Clever folding and seaming makes delightfully possible new realizations of the empty rectangle on the wall, if not right off the bat then perhaps as one of the first subseries (subsequent-within) of these new seaming paintings: First the seams are just to make newly real my protogeometric armature, and next the seams are to realize within themselves a wall-space of painting, opening up within this new méthode a Mallarméan moment to initiate my tracing-in-painting of my alternative history of lyric; in this same moment, making poignant the emptiness of the blank rectangular surface, is to be the gesture of the Summa pictorica printout. And so forth. Maybe that’s the first thematized group of these paintings; before then, just their partaking of the seaming method will sufficiently make of them a group, especially as considered within the frame-space of the kinds of painting I was working on up to now.

But what about the many other paintings which are even less underway? I think I want to continue to chip away at them, the ones on panel, the surface-on-wall series ones, the Pontormo-copiste ones, the “little guys” ones, all combinations thereof. I should not consent to be regressive with them; I shall keep trying new things; but they can be outlet projects, on the side

of and between (as the masks were for Grotjahn, during the butterflies) the seam paintings that I will begin to spend most of my at-home "painting" time in the planning of, the sequentializing of discrete steps and, at scanned intervals, the Ryman-unalienated sequential application of brushstrokes to, etc.

[Note about the irony that this is literally impossible with panels, whereas before but, here is the sublation: Now, with supersmooth, I can do to canvas--and specifically, under the arrangement that my iterative seaming entails--what I first categorically favored panels for. (That is, if I eventually get back around to wanting to do anything like a Botticellian contour or a van Eyck or Vermeer smooth-luminous glaze--which is not to be the first thing I try to strange-gather with this process, but is certainly within the horizon of these paintings' possibility.]

27 July 2025

Upon first glance at this operation, I might be guessed to appropriate one or more of several discourses (Greenberg's, Fried's, Rosenberg's, or, even, via Buren, Krebber's, depending on the viewer's imaginativeness); if each of these has had its say, has reached a certain resting place after having taken off with a certain set of values and momenta and a sense of a fresh start, I want to go much farther, taking the impurity (the remainder / residuum / caput mortuum / suaires / hbl element) not as a monumentally hard-won conclusion at the bottom of decades but rather as my point of departure. Copiously poeticizing, philosophizing, psychologizing; excreting my Summa pictorica, serially, without end, like Montaigne's marginalia style of writing in Bordeaux; like what Nancy does to Descartes in Ego Sum, imputing voices, working prodigiously an interlinear profusion; I am Descartes and I am also his evil demon and I am also every repetition of a cogito analytic including Heidegger's; already my Ludovic tries to do it, and from the very start the Cézanne one* is self-consciously emblematic-talismanic, from the very start the puttiphallic traces are in there, in the mists, among the vines, deep in the layered mirrors, from the very start the flickering-ironic globus cruciger is there problematizing and leaving not ambiguous but ambivalent the whole thing of Mathieu (and Klein and Grotjahn: Lacan, discourse itself as autocratic, systemic, closed, central), from the very start whole problematics fall into place as to be traced, their terms immediately self-evident, waiting only to be named and proceeded-through (painting as a procedure, the steps numbered, in lowercase numerals; but also a procession, in full-organ capital Romans):
From Cézanne, the landscape, the question of horizon imputed into my armature and variously worked out therein;
From Pontormo's Poggio citronnier, the poetic superposition of translucent planes (the seams made with matte medium, for example, over gessoed or ungessoed canvas, & layers of thin washes in between the layers of matte medium until it begins to become clear which ones are deeper and which ones are shallower and this is to create a technique-native sense of depth or something) asserting not just the Montale that it simply carries but also the Mallarmé

remémoration (“pli selon pli”) that it traces back to;
From Klimt, the discourse in which color is just a matter of modulation unto consummate volupté;
From Cézanne again (but really da Vinci, and forward unto Meuns Hantaï and most operationally Albers and, best, most recently, the Rafael Delacruz of Spangled Mind), color as a question of spatial depth;
From Mondrian, color as a question of planar weight (to be balanced with Tiepolo’s rococo lever);
From Roman wall painting (both the Boscoreale ones that taught de Kooning something, which I thought was about glowing gem-color, but which may have been anything; and the Getty ones that I love that I will see today), the inherent architecturality of painting, that is, its inherent contamination with architecture, i.e., the verticals in my paintings communicate with the room’s corners and edges, floor and ceiling and other walls and even ornament or lack thereof, and I can realize this by growing their scale up to match that of the panels at the Getty and making the weight of their verticals to match those in those panels and perhaps after that by pursuing the problematics le Corbusier treated in his murals (were they truly nomadic? How did he hang them in his spaces?);
And from everyone else, everything else.
I will quixotically pursue all of these!
[* I’ve already begun to lay out plans in my large sketchbook]

Perhaps the best thing about this whole prism--or, more precisely, my favorite of the countless hypotheses it sends my thrown-projection hurtling out toward--is its proclivity to countless baroquings. For example, another “suite,” “Chromaticism: Several orders,” in which subseries (that is, series within the suite) make the wheel aspect of my armature into an armature to show the circle-nature of one of several different understandings of color. For each of the following orders, if it is conceived as a sequence or a circle, that is to be converted into the spatialized circumference of my ellipses and then the folding can begin (see diagram). And the orders are: Red-blue-yellow and its mixings (do it with one set of primaries, and then do it again with another set, or do it with both at once, showing the difference); Quietzsch’s technicolor; Goethe, maybe; RAL or Pantone and a procedure like this one:

Two other, separate notes:

That the backgammon board--with its native palette of red and black, say, and limns of green yellow and violet, maybe--can be cleverly integrated within the wall-room-table subseries

(like this: It can be spatialized on the table and, recognizably the same board-variation, or a different board drawn from the same variation-logic, can be frontally drawn on as the seam-superstructure of the painting), and ought to because it sensitizes the turn-by-turn, i.e. scansional, nature of the prism, which is a huge chunk of its import to me; and, besides, backgammon has an ethos--Cartesian, but also Obolenski (sp.?), and also Achilles-Ajax, and also online gaming--that appeals deeply to me.

Re. Quietzsch: That his work is great even in dstryr precisely because his real medium all along was the texture of his decision-making, the character of his process: the relative rigor or sincerity with which systems are pursued and then taken flight from, with that particular texture, that humor, "style" I guess

28 July 2025

When I said "baroquing" recently, I also meant, and maybe even more closely, "maximalism"—but of a particular kind: that which in the baroque is no less present in Klimt and Riemenschneider than in Piranesi. This is what tenses perfectly against the inherent austerity that the restretching aspect will interpellate into my paintings; this is what I like. (That there is something to the structure of a Riemenschneider that I can transpose directly into the structure of my seaming; that this is, to me, to do the same thing as to achieve Klimt-lushness in a canal / strip / zip / channel; that this is good, directly of a piece with the very same impurity whose most basic expression is the stamping of a puttiphallus onto the matrix).

Dandyish to-dos:
First. A show entitled "folding," consisting of all of the paintings I have completed to date, all crammed into a corner, hung salon-style with as much blank wall as possible, making them look as unsuccessful as possible (up to and including the two paintings with pasted palette paper, to be subtitled "Dandyish painting 1" and "Dandyish painting 2," respectively; and the Grotjhanian painting, to which is to be added, after all, a globus cruciger at very top center (I do not blaspheme: My belief is, after all, Nancy's and Agamben's; I insist, after all, on my nacre-incrustation fable re. allure)). The press release is to consist only of a diagram of a hold'em hand, in which the only possible option is to fold; I'll have not the very worst hand, but nearly the worst one, the best option at this point being, certainly, to fold. This is to supply the intended reading to the show's title. The overtone about L.A. poker is to be gracefully (as in tastefully) unstated. I am to print, here, my Summa pictorica. Capitulating that I have not succeeded--yet--not this hand--in turning out good paintings.
Second. A Tiffany's-Door-sized show of approx. three and a half seam paintings. Can be titled "Folding II," this time with the obvious added resonance of the creases. The press release is to be

the perruque excerpt of Michel de Certeau's Practice of Everyday Life paired with a note that I work at a canvas shop that I don't actually exploit, I strictly follow the rules, but I did make these paintings entirely there.
Third, though this may come before the second: My "Anything but painting" idea, with the ghostlike Klee-like Rilkean puppets. Maybe I can coordinate my Ludovic Nemo thing with this--the "oscillatory work" in which I have to put stock for the times when my paintings fail to redeem real life, even though I have consummated my permanent devotion to them? "I'm still a painter and this is not art, these are just puppets." Should Rilke's doll essay or Kleist's marionette essay be excerpted?
Fourth. A show which might be entitled "Folding III," consisting of major-key Beethoven-Fifth suite of my seam paintings, running through my Pascal-coded or encyclopedia-coded or O.E.D.-coded systems that I plotted the initial hints of arcs of yesterday. This time, I'm folding my "performative" "provisional" "ironic" "dandyish" "conceptual" "cred."
Sixth: Begin taking bottles, the nicest coolest wine and beer bottles and also all our Tanqueray and vermouth bottles, to the shop once Theo is back and I can see what I can use to apply heat to the neck just to evaporate the labels and hopefully gently deform them into cool vases.
A sixth dandyish idea — another exhibition titled "anything but painting" and but it's not got a numeral it's just the reused title (très désœuvré)— and it's all my photographs of painting aestheticized (the light, the materials, the coffee), and maybe even some pictures of just my coffee mixed in

All this because of the intensity with which last night (upon the Theophanes angels exhibition at Reena Spaulings, and the Ulysses one Tatol reviewed) I felt that Strau was the artist the most kindred to my heart of any I've ever learned about. And the intensity with which Sutter-Shudo's "end of thinking capacity" show was the best in L.A. since I've moved here (?)—and it's perfect that I didn't see it

[Addition 1 August 2025:

But if I stage my dandyish "folding" and print the manuscript, it would be just that—staged—and the joke would be not precisely on myself, it would not be Krebber's self-deprecation; rather it would be an enormously audacious deconstruction of that abdication itself, from within, the thoughts the summa is full of—thoughts which I still believe are alive, and fertile, giving onto paintings, still—are an enormous subterraneum to the well-constructed and indeed too-well-played joke on the surface.]

30 July 2025

Tending-unto-incoherence as method--

Incoherence-as-horizon-as-method--

The only honest registration of intractability, intractability as inevitable fundamental

---

Tatol on Cézanne's drawings, ringing true to something I might have suspected about what will (at best, if I get down to it) become of my particular impulse to systematize (to make the conjugationalization just palpable enough without, of course, ever attaining any kind of exhaustion): "… the slightness of his achievement [in reference to the Laurence quote about how he did succeed in fully knowing a few apples, and, less fully, a couple jugs] is in a way the finest realization of his desire, because what he desired to capture remains uncaptured and therefore unsullied. The plenitude of the Real remains infinite, as it always will. That art is this attempt to catch what cannot be caught is the last refuge of romanticism, the urge to preserve the fullness of our desires and perhaps in exceptional circumstances realize some small sliver of their depths. As such, one could argue that art may serve less to generate the ends of a produced artwork and more to perpetuate the artist's experience of this plenitude of the possibilities of representation."

Fulfill these notes from 2 July;

To clip my serpentine old alchemist to the largest surface I have, contingent that if I get a larger one I'll clip it there; but that it is to be hidden in the back of a room filled with my puttiphalli, a looming coda to them, not their centerpiece.

To buy more of that umber I ran out of, and also a lake and/or carmine red (alchemical resonances? Which one resembles Pontormo's chalk? Even in asking this I commit an enormous faux pas)

To add Pastoreau and Danny's color books to my reading list, near top?

All this in order to be able to make my existing white feel whiter by tempering it, and therefore alternately either hardening or lightening it. This is what can be done with white, as Hantai established (by doing, not by saying), analogous to what Matisse established can be done to blue by cutting into it and letting it breathe (this Hantai did say, as did Matisse himself I think, and in any case Duthuit).

To look up all the Roman painters in the 1957-8 chapter

_____I need to go back through my photos since 23 May and paste in here, with at least a minimum of pointing to the charge that moved me, such photos as the Pontormo drawings that opened themselves to me, the Grünewald details that begot sprite-archetypes (which are, for some reason, always in the plural) or furthered the building-out of the uncle-alchemist-archetype (which is, for some reason, always in the singular), and perhaps my many open tabs too.

And I need to fill in all the reading-notes above since around 6 June

1 August 2025

From near the beginning of the Krebber catalogue raisonné essay I experienced, on the way to work this morning, a feeling of identification with him as strong as that with Strau around a week ago; I do not remember exactly what prompted it, but I think it was something about the time when he was choked, unable to exhibit, or able but unwilling; some specific line, I think

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Astonished how close an analogue Lupertz's "dithyramb" is to my "prismatic armature"

A footnote to this note which was meant to stand on its own for the wholeness of said analogy: Here is just the tip of the iceberg of what I meant, "Zelt 43 - Dithyrambisch" perhaps more than anything else:

And also, in this dithyramb, but a different aspect of it (i.e., the prism viewed from a different side, exposing a different facet), there is visible the seed of Grotjahn's whole project, the one which can be seen even as early as the butterflies but which really "unmasks" itself in the faces, and is not absent in his sculpture either: Roughly, that there is a face, and a face of a certain kind, found here, from within nonobjective marks, and made fruitful (multiplied) through nonobjective deformations (conjugations), too:

Add Duchamp's Japanese Apple figure (?) and his man and girl in spring (?) to my list of things to study toward my "little guys." The latter, and "sonate," also offer exquisite color harmonies to strive for

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Sequel to my thoughts from Monday:

But if I stage my dandyish "folding" and print the manuscript, it would be just that—staged—and the joke would be not precisely on myself, it would not be Krebber's self-deprecation; rather it would be an enormously audacious deconstruction of that abdication itself, from within, the thoughts the summa is full of—thoughts which I still believe are alive, and fertile, giving onto paintings, still—are an enormous subterraneum to the well-constructed and indeed too-well-played joke on the surface.

Yesterday Francisco the former (or perhaps still current, but on his way to Irvine for a University of California MFA in Poetry) gallery attendant from Michael Werner emailed me (he got my address, he said, from Eileen the Artillery editor) to let me know that Michael Werner is hiring an intern and that I have a "good shot" at it if I apply. I was at work when I read his email, it was the afternoon, but I was terribly absentminded the rest of the day and all through the evening, thinking about that, mind reeling, the golden aura of that great dealer, who in some real ways made the city of Cologne (for art), thinking too about a giant (an absolute giant) like Lüpertz, and special saints of mine (of the paradiso terrestre) like Kantarovsky (about whom, recall, the cutting of aluminum panels in adulatory emulation, the near goosebumps when Eli Diner told me that whoever had just walked up to the table had done the animation on his monkey video, and that particular Matissean painting of his which stays locked in my mind even though the curves, the forms, even the motifs slip out of my memorial grasp (and thus, of course, even as a digitally transmitted image, thus it is that it is a painting, and not a word, a poem, or anything

combinatorial)).

For better and for worse, and this has likely been clear from the shape of my sentences (“style”) (or lack thereof) lately (or perhaps since around January of this year), my thoughts go faster than the speed of the sentence or--maybe this has always been the case, but--perhaps it’s that they’ve always done this but that now they are not successfully subsequently reined in.

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2 August 2025

The following are transcribed from voice notes; they can be read with the voice notes for corrections, if it matters.

Trakl, Rilke, mechanisms, chromaticism:

Just marking an image, because I have it, not because it seems particularly significant useful or beautiful. What I'm doing is walking along the boulevard in the dark. The sidewalk is empty so I don't feel self-conscious to speak aloud. I'm out on the street because I'm experiencing a version of “love’s sorrow” that I'm experiencing not as sadness nor exactly is pain would rather as bitterness and not I think just because I am reading Bernard in the meantime what I'm doing more approximately is listening to a reading of taco that Bernhard [I get run into by a car] that the Neue Gallery in New York produced I may have misheard, but what I heard was a certain mechanism which produces a multicolor effect or a chromatic effect in the sense in which Tal uses the word chromatic to describe only certain ones of Grotjahn’s skulls that were exhibited at Karma. What I heard was this that it was said of a fish that its body was red and its thin was green and then a line or two later the fish was described as swimming in a stream, perhaps and the way the fish was referred was with its blue skin. The mechanism is that skin and have a color and body can have a color and skin can have a color, but skin cannot practically have a color that neither body nor fin have and thus in this durationalized succession of colorings, the fish is made to acquire a chromaticism or multicolor aspect, which feels to me to have something in common with the promaticism particular to German painting, so-called expressionist painting produced at the same time Trackle was active circa 19110 a related as effect, which I remember less clearly for having read it an hour or two ago is sourced to Rilke's second dino elegy in which dawn is

made present and a half breath afterward mountains are said to be red, and the linkage is not made explicit, but the succession there, even if much more naturalized has all of the primordial beauty of the mythicization or fabulation that I read about what was it? The old man in the mountains, which is invoked in the two role to explain what was it the last blue glow at twilight or the first blue violet glow at dawn or maybe it was even the same redness of just a couple of real mountains at dawn that each of these two mechanisms is something I could deploy to my own ends first of all and second of all that Trakl's poems are still worth making into scaffolds for writings or paintings, even after Nate Boyce has already done so for his works in oil thick oil, thicker than I can use on aluminum thick aluminum molded as wet clay or rather moist, not wet clay where it takes the imprint of the fingers, but only when real pressure is exerted i.e it does not give onto drips or streams this kind of aluminum. It must be cast I think one last note to register in this video produced by the Neue gallery. There was a picture of men around a table. The table resembled on in a painting with beer on top by Quintessa Matranga, the photograph resembled Duchamp's early painting of people in a very green yard a bourgeois yard, not the springtime painting, nor the bush painting and the arrangement I thought this table, the yard, common to photograph and Duchamp painting the table likewise the people around it likewise could be made once again into an armature and in retrospect, I see that because of the way such a table is having vertical non-negligible edge surface, and circular top surface that there are present ellipses and verticals, such as the ones I've taken it upon myself to paint again and again, and have even, in fact succeeded in doing so

Another Rilke note:
From the same Second Duino Elegy: Earlier in the allergy there was a passage of 2 to 5 lines (if I recall), psychedelic in the most abstract way that I still love, that I have loved for a long time: It has to do with harp strings, harpsichord chords, and grain (as in wood grain, such as it was described in Hopkins's "Glory be to God for dappled things …").

Note about in-progress painting:
A stray note on a painting: I need to consider carefully whether the verticals whose resonances and correspondences I have been fretting over in my latest completed sketch combining two Pontormo-lifted figures into an armature, which I will sparingly paint in modulations of blue derived from Schiele's drawing of Klimt with its traces of modulated blue paint. I need to consider carefully whether those verticals whose resonances I've been fretting over are not on a scale much too fine to be apprehended and are instead, only serving to muddle the fundamental correspondence of verticals, which defines the structuring stretching ting tension that is to activate the painting I have a hunch that the scale to which I am attending ought to be coarsened at least until I start working on a larger scale. Perhaps if I want to deal on such a fine scale now, it ought to be on panels that I am cordoning off as preparatory studies toward eventual larger paintings.

3 August 2025

That, if I ever were to do for re-Symbolism what Michael Fried did by picking Olitski, Stella, Noland, that for re-Symbolism it would perhaps be Stutz, Alderson, and Lieberman.

6 August 2025

For some reason I feel--and have felt, for at least a year now so far as I can clearly remember it--always a compulsion to proceed into painting without ongoing reference to my noted plans, once I have made them. Some kind of compulsion to establish by trial the ongoing-basis fact that I have everything I need to paint with inside of me, that I'm not turning materials and notes into paintings but rather just turning materials into paintings, just performing the basic operation of revealing the beauty that was always structurally inherent as a possibility or a virtuality within the materials themselves together with the basic (nothing special) operations of a conjugatory operator (myself) with comprehensive exposure (which is strictly not to say talent of any kind).

And yet this doesn't make sense at all, clearly, not least because I have always said that these notes are properly speaking a part of my brain, the ticker-tape part, strictly an extension of my memory, having no less in common with the other parts of my memory than the short-term register has in common with the long-term fact-bin or the ungovernable chasm from which Proustian spontaneities emerge (etc.).

And my memory of what I note is always abysmal, by the basic operating conditions of: If I write it, then I don't need to keep track of it in brain-memory anymore. Thus "excrescence."

As far as bearing upon my seams idea, in which I still believe in a way I don't believe in anything else*, see this example: I was blocked at an embarrassingly early juncture, even on my very first trial (the Cézanne one, Lauves, taking landscape-via-horizon-line as its motor-problematic), until I just looked at these notes again and everything was so clear, it was so obvious how I was to continue, and now I'm getting along.

[* Even as I continue to make things** that try to give the lie to any notion of specialness for the seaming process and prove, as I still insist, that what in that "idea" is really accomplishing the breakthrough is not the mechanical talismanic act of the ad nauseam restretching but rather the scansion of the continuity of decisions into a new array of decisions which is still technically infinite but which is, at the level of the grain (the level of the fold of the pursuit in which my point-of-view is necessarily lodged when I paint), sparser--that is, made up of decisions which are, with the scansion, on an individual basis technically more difficult than the ones that I faced before the scansion; but, in practice, since they do not follow one upon the other with such unmanageable continuity (and since in making decisions I always see through the possibilities into the hydra-next decisions that would be projected to follow from that option), I am newly able to operate.]

[** e.g. the one with Kirchner and Matisse's blue still life in it, the one where I didn't make any restretching seams but am using my drawing basically as though I had done; and also the silverpoint-on-supersmooth-panel with blue markings, a simple instantiation of the color-premise I found in Schiele's drawing-with-paint of Klimt, which I am now having to put in a little extra in order to finish, namely giving it a little bit of Pontormo-flesh just along certain segments of vertical, giving it, that is, a little of Duchamp's "Young man and girl in spring" and a little of the Poggio lunette from which most of its subtending structure derived, at the level of the figures' poses, that is, not of the armature]

What am I doing? What am I doing? What I am doing: (This is how nonverbal I am when I am painting; this time, I felt like writing down the following anyway, in whatever even more particularly unintelligible way in which it will appear coming from this state-of-mind of point-of-view, namely nonverbality (bêtise) of painting)

I am trying, after the turn which the Schiele-Klimt blue-oil-on-supersmooth-panel is now taking with my decision to try to put a little Pontormo-figure-flesh into it, to just instantiate a first way in which the figure (at least the figure such as I love it, such as I find in it the deepest mystery of paint (oil paint, invented precisely for flesh), such, that is, as I find in my most brilliant lights: Pontormo, Balthus, and the rest) can be digested into my armatures, that is, digested into an authentic and operable re-Symbolist painting. Note that this "first way in which" falls woefully short of the possibilities that even I can see for such a premise--the possibilities, that is, that would be there for one who can paint better and more than me. (I'm utterly incompetent. I don't know the first thing, and my hands know even less, and my energy gets me nowhere at a time.)

I am trying, in my two Matisse-based 11x16 linen-over-panels (the one red and simpler and more earlier to the seam idea (but still stumbling over a stupid idea of lining fields of color with complementary haloes--I could not resist this daft and unnecessary complication), the other blue and trying to take certain gorgeousnesses of Klimt and Davos Kirchner into itself, getting, that is, ahead of itself), to establish a rapport between relational-composition tensions such as they can be found in masters of that paradigm (Mondrian and, first, here, Matisse) and my own efforts at

instituting that paradigm once more anew (with barcodifications of color-chords, spatialized by the simple dual means of (a) the armatures which turn the two-dimensional image space into a matter of strips and (b) the barcode idea which turns strips into "sentences" that can easily "say" (rephrase) what they see in certain particularly moving paintings).

I am trying, in my (first) Cézanne one on #12 canvas with PVA, to, as I said, take landscape-via-horizon-line as its motor-problematic, which can be done in countless ways and all this first one really does is to open that possibility and I will not make good on the premise until I repeat it with many other Cézannes as my starting point (selected with an utterly specific discerning-eye: namely, the discerning-eye proper only to the posing of this precise motor-problematic), and with, say, silvery Corots too, and the select strains of Pissaro which Clark showed to be indispensable to Cézanne himself, and with Nguyen and Proust's infinitely liquefied and detail-abimated Moreau landscapes, and with the countless greens I've loved before (Jules-Alexis Mounier's into which I read all the geometric biology that Deleuze reads into Spinoza and also all the complexity-theology-organicity of Teilhard--and so forth)

I am, incidentally, in two of the above-mentioned paintings (the simpler (red) Matisse one and the Lauves Cézanne one), instantiating an idea to which I felt a certain compulsion after agonizing at length over its alternatives: I am having some of the gesso ridges at the lowest stratum of the paint skein, having some flashe over these and also on the bare canvas, having other of the gesso ridges over this flash, and--this last point not yet quite settled--having some of the ridges with flash over them also get more ridged gesso directly on top of themselves. For some reason I thought the painting would feel dead without an interlacing at least this intricate, i.e. without at least this minimum of strata-interlacing.

Why am I doing these things (and any others that I'm doing at the same time)? I don't really know; but, most proximally, it is because these are pursuits which are in the air around me, which I find myself in some sense in the middle of (due to whatever mess of overlapping discourses I've found myself pulled into over the course of the last five years), and the whole value of the seaming is to make this pursuits practicable. Though it does feel urgent to address: What is the orientation of these pursuits? The long-term large-scale high-level differentiation of my own painterly sensibility, whose contours come gradually into view the more I register the pursuits which tug me along? And what is this sensibility (and is it any use to try to consciously articulate it)? If I were asked now, I'd say that my sensibility, at its best, is an affinity for that painting which presents (accent on the first syllable) the inframince and ultrasublime glory of creation (the word "glory" still feels wrong, as does Herrlichkeit; Pound's and Aquinas's languages of the "luminous" help to triangulate it out into a better registration of what I mean by it, even if they don't offer any more definitive a substitute). It is because it stands for this painting (as Nancy insisted) that the name of Hantaï is the most indispensable one for me.

I said "presents (accent on the first syllable)"; the technique of painting is any technique which does this.

One such technique is that which Duchamp so briefly but magisterially employed in his "Young man and girl in spring," "Swift nudes," and "Large glass." These use the prism of erotic-geometric fictions (arrangements) to access with unparalleled directness the mystery that is the liquid substance of eros itself, which is also the Love which resembles electricity or the forces to which micro-scale physics addresses itself, which is to say, under many names (caffeine, etc.), God as Spinoza and von Balthazar see him.

Another such technique is Cézanne's. From a starting point of imitatio (mimesis applied to the

eye-blink sensation, that is, a technique which first tries to atomize experience and then to translate the freeze-frame onto canvas) Cézanne worked until it was proven that this presenting must really always take the form of the crafting of a fiction, and the blanc reserves of the support bear witness to this fact.

It is because in Cézanne painting landed definitively in the playing-field of the crafting of exquisite fictions that since him (through the Symbolisms and Modernism up to us) true painting has been Mallarméan. Duchamp, too, crafted exquisite fictions; it can readily be seen that the erotic geometries of the paintings mentioned above are precisely this.

The best fictions are the ones which can be repeatedly told to ever new ends, the ones to which every new face (every new person, and every new regard of each person) can turn and always and every time accede to a new aspect. The aspiration of my seam paintings is to be such a repeatable fiction, presenting a new face of the brilliance of creation every time it is repeated. The infinite nuances of uncountable horizons--each nuance uniquely sensitized by a new landscape-prism (a new refraction of landscape through my seamed armature). The infinite nuances of uncountable erotic-geometric tensions--each one uniquely sensitized by the threading of an arrangement of "little guys" through the same seamed armature (but how? This I know even less). The infinite nuances of the pleasure of tensile balance (the understanding of a painting inherited, still, from Denis, sustained by Sérusier's talisman), of which Matisse and Mondrian are still the highest available exemplars, but whose game can be played again and again and still every time brought to ever more exquisite heights. The infinite nuances of oil paint made flesh, whether van-Eyck-liquid-smooth or Vermeer-enamel-silent or whatever else, in every case as mysterious as the stuff of life (the living stuff in which the soul inheres without coinciding) itself. How many of these regimes are necessarily copresent in every painting I will try to make? How can I bear the constant demand to arrange every single painting so that it breathes with the life without which the painting is dead--how can I know always whether the painting yet breathes, and what is needed to make it so?

I am wanting, desperately, to turn to rabbit skin glue to at once (a) transfigure my still-rather-arbitrary (in their application) ridges of acrylic gesso (which are not, for that, without a certain blobject-adjacent appeal of their own) into little focalizations of exquisite rabbit-skin materiality (that in what with Warnock-looking-at-E.R.-time-Hantaï can be seen as tradition- (and alchemy- and Catholicism-) -convoking Hantaï); and (b) standardize the format--no more this-or-that ground on this-or-that substrate, instead, always be rabbit skin glue on canvas, and thus be much more palpably in touch with the actual materializations of both Hantaï and Cézanne.

But is rabbit skin glue too expensive to do this with? And anyway, because of the necessary heating-solution, I cannot practicably do this until I reach a point where I have (a) enough space and (b) enough planning underway to be able to apply one skin-seam-ridge to each of at least ten (or so) canvases at a time--otherwise, I'd never be having paintings (to speak Stein's language which is, deeply, the language of such paintings as I am just now finally figuring out how to

make, after countless angles of stymied approach).

And--though the necessity of addressing this question is contingent upon the avowal of the above-broached problematic of whether there can be any life in a painting without a minimum of strata-interlacing that integrates the seam-ridges themselves--there is still the following: I do not know whether, with the chemistry of rabbit skin glue (including its value of exceptionally effective tautening of a stretched canvas), there is any alternative to the following implementation of it into my seam-painting procedure: Draw an armature onto raw canvas; apply skin ridges, one at a time, to the raw canvas, necessarily probably soiling the raw canvas in the process; then final-stretch the canvas, and only then brush on an even layer of skin-glue over all the ridges and raw canvas, tautening it with finality. Oil paint can only be applied now; which means that the ridges are all strictly below (strata-wise) the (oil) paint, so, if I then knife the paint on, I will not be able to stamp down the fraying seams of the barcode strips (as I have felt inclined to do--but, probably, I can't do this anyway, whether I'm using rabbit skin or no).

8 August 2025

Now at 6 p.m. I drink espresso from my green cup and read the first 50 of Wittgenstein's remarks on color. I find that the first was the one Nancy quoted in the last thing he wrote about Hantaï; into it there are good things I can read, that I can imagine, but really it is opaque to me now as it was then.

I have an idea, while reading, specifically while reading that a white surface may reflect (and being reminded of the reflection I love to see when I look from a raking angle at a canvas I've just finished sanding), that I could make an armature which faces two small supersmooth canvases against each other, kissing or almost kissing, held in place, surfaces to be viewed from an enforced raking angle; the whole sight that this object would afford is very much in the spirit of my "anything but paintings," the stretchers and versos it would expose, the armature itself which may look much like the construction of the stretchers or may be rather more homely, and/or may somewhat resemble Klee's dolls (puppets).

10 August 2025

Note that, organic and nice, I have made some notes in my fabriano sketchbook, because they were associated with things I had to diagram; no surprise, but still nice to be reassured that this does not go away, that the words follow one upon the other when handwritten in a way that use of keys still has never come to be able to touch, even three and a half years on.

Sitting on the side edge of my bed, eating my yogurt with my back to the wall, I found that these two small Bonnard reproductions can find a way into real painting of my own via my current schema. The one on the left can do it if the red Matisse can—I must find a way to make good on that, and if I can, then this one follows. The one on the right is more thought-provoking. The main feature of interest, now, is not the plaid as it once was, nor Ravageau, but rather the scale disjunction of the figures at upper left; these anticipate the set-set of Matisse's bonheur de vivre which is one of that painting's most salient groundbreakings, and perhaps Puvis is the only antecedent within reach for the Bonnard usage. But here's the substance of what I'm saying with this: In order to authentically treat a composition like this in a seam painting, say, just for example (as a first-painting initiation of this dynamic, to be flexed in other conjugations once I prove that a directly-linked instantiation is possible for me, I.e. repeating the dynamic of the initiatory horizon-Cézanne painting to be conjugated differently once I attain satisfaction in the more directly subordinated one, that which I still have not attained yet), just for the first one, that there be seams (verticals) corresponding to the foreground figures, and a second set of vertical seams—a second armature's worth, even, the introduction of which is what makes this Bonnard encounter this morning into a radical and crucial junction in the still-slow and stunted unfolding of my new idea—a second armature's worth of verticals at upper left, and, here is the kicker, the only way in which to integrate it into a unified picture is by means of a novel use of the atmospheric perspective my understanding of the working of which is my own parsing of Cézanne's radically novel parsing of da Vinci's radical parsing of sense data. In other words, I will only be able to successfully proceed into the introduction of a second, minor (in scale, but not necessarily in terms of pictorial dynamic: all parts relate to all parts on equal footing, technically), armature into a painting, once I am far enough down this Cézanne-horizon line to feel I have a facility with the breathing pictorial workings that are the life stuff of why it was worth getting into in the first place.

13 August 2025

Reading Bois "Matisse and Arche-drawing" before finally getting to see the illustrated volumes of Reverdy (Matisse's Jockeys camouflés, Gris's Au soleil du plafond):

I thought it was funny that a phrase like "pictorial noumena" was ready to hand from a painter at this time:
"When it was exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants in 1905, an exhibition including Seurat and Van Gogh retrospectives, the critics most favorably disposed to Matisse found [Luxe, calme

et volupté] offensive; it provoked this judgment from Denis: "Luxe, calme et volupté is a theoretical diagram," a judgment reinforced a few months later by the following outbursts: "it's dialectics!," "it's artificiality," "it's pictorial noumena (des noumènes de tableaux)."”
My conception of painting is still caught somewhere between siding with Denis’s position and, directly to the contrary, valorizing the very rebus-status that he reads into this painting.
I’m reminded of something I read yesterday about Chinese literati painting. I admired this notion, and even imagined taking it to a certain kind of extreme, new great lengths of this same practice enabled newly by the type of Lieberman-core registraria or annotationism of which my notes themselves are striving to be exemplary: “Consider Night-Shining White by Han Gan (1977.78), an image of a horse. Originally little more than a foot square, it is now mounted as a handscroll that is twenty feet long as a result of the myriad inscriptions and seals (marks of ownership) that have been added over the centuries, some directly on the painted surface, so that the horse is all but overwhelmed by this enthusiastic display of appreciation. Miraculously, the animal’s energy shines through. It does so because the artist has managed to distill his observations of both living horses and earlier depictions to create an image that embodies the vitality and form of an iconic “dragon steed.” He has achieved this with the most economical of means: brush and ink on paper. / This is the aim of the traditional Chinese painter: to capture not only the outer appearance of a subject but its inner essence as well—its energy, life force, spirit.”
I stick on that last point: The synthesis of outer appearance and inner essence is only achieved in the authentic contact between traditional (flux or brics of literary-material) rigor and new apperception (antithesis of the mechanical); and in that contact, there is “energy, life force, spirit”--that which one knows in a painting at an instant.

Bois mentions Matisse’s initial autodidacticism with “goupil’s manual,” which may be more useful to me than Signac’s pamphlet published in the revue Blanche (de Delacroix au neo-impressionnisme)

“[Matisse, in “Modernism and Tradition,”] writes: "In the post-impressionist picture, the subject is thrown into relief by a contrasting series of planes which always remain secondary. For me, the subject of a picture and its background have the same value, or, to put it more clearly, there is no principal feature, only the pattern is important. The picture is formed by the combination of surfaces, differently colored, which results in the creation of an 'expression'" (Flam, p. 72).”
I pause here to note that in the above, rightly or no, and very briefly, perhaps just in what the “series of planes” hints toward, I read a vision of the kind of painting I am working toward. Whether there is true stuff for me in here is worked out to greater and greater complexity in what follows, which includes, I note first, a pointer to a chess game metaphor that is of certain interest to me (in brief, because it is a matter of precisely that which I accomplish by my successive stretchings, the turn-by-turn aspect that introduces, analogous to Cézanne’s discretization of petites touches).
“Then follows a comparison--at the time quite banal--between music and color, and then what constitutes one of the recurrent themes in Matisse's Statements, namely the pos-sibility, if not the necessity, of color transposition (the example provided is that of translating a red-green-blue-black harmony into a white-blue-red-green harmony), a possibility associated, as is often the

case with Matisse, with the metaphor of the chess game.35 At first sight, Matisse's formulation seems to be quite ill-chosen: is not divi-sionism, especially in its "pointillist" version, in itself a demonstration that "there is no principal feature" and that "the subject of a picture and its background have the same value"? As Meyer Schapiro long ago observed, isn't this what constitutes the very novelty of Seurat's system?36 A remark Matisse makes to Gaston Diehl, embroidering on the idea found at the beginning of the passage just cited (the "contrasting planes... always secondary"), sheds some light on the problem Matisse had at the time with divisionism: he was striving, he says, to paint by "marking out zones of influence which elicit reactions, proceeding by successive gradations of tones." But:
"I just couldn't get into the swing of it. Once I had laid my dominant, I couldn't help putting on its reaction, equally intense: I would be working on a small landscape built up in dots of color (taches], and I just couldn't achieve a luminous harmony by following the prescribed rules. I was continually forced to start all over again."37 / What are we to make of these "reactions" that Matisse cannot help making as strong as his "dominants"? …" And so on.

14 August 2025

Here in "Matisse and arche-drawing" Bois writes something about the woodcut "Seated nude" which may well have given rise to Jonas Wood's entire suite of etchings with Jacob Samuel. (Not least because, in the talk I attended with a classmate of his on the subject of their professor, the only book on the syllabus Wood concretely mentioned was Painting as Model; he made a point to emphasize that it was brainy stuff, or even to insinuate that it was beyond understanding.

"The largest of [the woodcuts], Seated Nude (Nu de profil sur une chaise longue grand bois) (fig. 9), is almost like a stylistic exercise detailing the different possibilities of modulation through quantity: around the brilliant whiteness of the nude, Matisse seems to have wanted to explore the entire spectrum of luminous intensities, looking for what I shall call the "degree-zero" of expression by drawing. He was looking for the simplest way of expressing both the largest and smallest of differences. To do so, he virtually eliminates one of the parameters of graphic art-varying the thickness of the strokes and concentrates on line direction (or line form, since some of the lines are reduced to large dots) and above all on the density and extension of the various "patterns" produced by the lines, all of them very different. Apart from the internal "contours" that just faintly impinge on the whiteness of the torso, there is not a single zone that does not demonstrate the infinite variety of effects Matisse achieves with the most rudimentary means: the white of the floor is "whiter" than that of the wooden leg of the chaise longue (since the spaces between the two strokes are larger at this point, as is the overall zone defined by this set of strokes and spaces), but it even varies from the right-hand corner of the print to the bottom left-hand edge. Why? Because in this latter section, the network of lines figuring the slats is tighter; because the direction of the lines is less dynamic (they have gone from being oblique to being vertical; and finally because the space between the bottom edge of the print and the leg of the chaise longue is less extensive in area; reducing the amount of white reduces the amount of light. To be more precise, in each case the white both is and is not the same: physically, as light

of a specific wavelength, as what Josef Albers calls a "factual fact," it is the same; but in terms of the way it acts, its effect, which is not fixed but subordinate both to the context in which it appears and to a subject's perception--thus, as an "actual fact"--it is not the same. The demonstration could be repeated for all the peripheral zones of the print, whether for the swirling striations in the top left-hand corner (a progressive loosening of a network of lines, harmonizing or contrasting plastically with the contours of the nude, a centrifugal movement from light to dark), for the upper portion of the figure's hair, for the narrow space to the right of her neck, or else for the herringbone motif at bottom left, which seems to metonymically figure the (otherwise ignored) marquetry on the floor: each one of these surfaces is streaked with parallel lines, but their direction and, once again, the density of their respective networks (in other words, the quantity of white separating the individual lines) are different in each case. In order to test even further his ability to modulate, Matisse introduces a second kind of lattice, this one properly decorative in the positive sense that Matisse gives to this word-a lattice that perhaps constitutes an ironic adieu to divisionism. Made up of black dots (and once again producing a different luminous effect depending on their shape and distribution: some are circular and thinly scattered, others elongated like abortive lines and more tightly grouped), the surface defining the cloth stretching between the legs of the chaise longue not only adds an extra possibility to the arsenal that Matisse seems to want to display here in exhaustive fashion, it also provides us with a direct link between the woodcuts of 1906 and the painter's final graphic works, the pen and brush drawings dating from 1948 to 1951. Indeed, we find this same speckling effect in the 1948 drawing entitled Still Life with Pineapple [Nature morte l'ananas] (fig. 10) about which the very least one can say is that the painting that repeats the same composition (but dispensing with the speckling) comes nowhere near attaining the same luminous fulgurance. This late echo of the experimental work of 1906, at the moment when the "Matisse system" perhaps reached its fullness in painting, just prior to the final adventure of the cutouts, is a further mark of the inaugural character these woodcuts had for him, especially the largest of them.
Seated Nude is like a catalogue of effects, an exploratory board on which Matisse wanted to try for the greatest number of differences in modulation through quantity: in the almost hyperbolic demonstration he indulges in here, there is something of the intoxicated glee of the scientist whose hypothesis is in the process of being experimentally confirmed. By contrast, after the exuberance of the fauve canvases, Le Bonheur de vivre will, without quite managing it, tend to reduce this multiplication and extreme diversification of color-value zones: a "synthetic" reordering after the scattered variegation engendered by the graphic analysis carried out in the Seated Nude.”

I thought to myself, while reading “Matisse and arche-drawing” and particularly the above-cited section, that, if, as Fr. Gregory mentioned, I were ever to be invited to teach some class session or handful of class sessions of art history to Cistercian students, that this essay would be a perfect thing to teach.

Tonight I finally, for the first time, began to prepare a batch of rabbit skin glue from the pouch of granules that I bought when I was up to my neck in my Hantaï thesis.

I was going also to begin translating Au soleil du plafond, but, thinking that my mind is not right for the kind of caffeinated turns of phrase which, in order to be even a passable translation, ought to be ready to hand around every corner as they were, jumping into my head, when first I read those handwritten-printed words, I decided instead to (if it is asked why there could be a state of mind too fatigued to translate but not too fatigued to draw, I rest on principle that I ought like Matisse to restrict myself to drawing when there is not sun for paint--that is, that I ought to make it so that there is no evening when I do not draw even if there are mornings when I do not paint; I am failing to articulate the actual logic of the principle of this “on principle” but it is there. It is this: That Matisse would draw in the ill-lit evenings even when a full day of painting had taken its toll on his seeing-mind; that by the dual authority to which I am subject, that is, Matisse and Jonas Wood (because he was the first living artist whose work I was able to truly see, to open my eyes to), I must maintain the lifeblood & the rigor & the non-stasis & the sense-of-possibility of my paintings by means of drawing without cease, drawing more regularly than I do now, say, at least one discrete act of it per evening).

And tomorrow, together with long-pent bulk of painting, and with (in just the right light) a frivolous sort of cataloguing of what I have made lately (to test my currently-held opinion that I do not yet have anything I could show to someone asking whether I am a painter--i.e., my opinion, in which I have for a moment recently lapsed, but which I still now hold, that, were I again offered an opportunity to show paintings as I was by someone like Max, that I would again have to demur, an extremely loaded demurral, as unappealing as any particular such offer may be).

In Dossier Pontormo Yve-Alain Bois argues directly that, in the below drawing, Pontormo was doing what Bois would later argue so strenuously was the central action of all the paintings and drawings of “the Matisse system” and in particular the drawings and woodcuts that he dwells on in “Matisse and Arche-drawing.” What strange timing, that, a day after finishing that Matisse essay of his, I stumble upon this stretch of text in searching for some Pontormo drawings (that I remembered mentally setting aside; I’d done this on 16 July 2025, apparently) to copy. I thought I was reading Lebenszteijn, and was thus even more surprised, until I got to the end, initialed “Y.-A. B.”

“La seule étude qui nous reste pour le personnage le plus indécent de la fresque, le jeune adolescent nu et cambré en arrière, les jambes écartées mollement pendantes sur le parapet, est tracée à la sanguine (p. 103), instrument dont se sert souvent Pontormo pour «mettre au propre» ses trouvailles graphiques faites à la pierre noire. C'est l'une des feuilles les plus-célèbres de Pontormo, et la plus nerveuse de la série. L'angularité de la ligne, accentuant les articulations du corps, y amplifie l'agressivité du geste d'interpellation et semble atteindre les hachures du fond qui auréolent la figure d'un rythme tantôt giratoire, tantôt radial, prolongeant parfois - comme autour de la jambe droite - celles qui constituent le modelé interne. Il s'agit là, sans doute, dans cet investissement centrifuge du fond, de l'invention la plus radicale de Pontormo. Quoi de commun à ces études, en effet, sinon la disposition des figures sur la page, figures dont la contraction/expansion anatomique charge d'énergie la surface blanche qui les entoure : jamais avant Pontormo l'espace sur lequel s'enlèvent les figures n'avait à ce point été tout à la fois dépeuplé et investi en son entier, comme si ce que les corps des putti retiennent d'un côté (les jambes repliées), ils le dépensaient de l'autre dans la dissolution de leurs extrémités aux confins de la feuille. La fresque conserve cette circulation énergique en latéralité : en octroyant aux figures une profondeur restreinte pour étirer leur contrapposto, en les suspendant rythmiquement sur toute la largeur de la fresque dans un espace frontalisé à comme sur une portée musicale, Pontormo oblige le spectateur à construire les liens graphiques que l'unité narrative de la scène ne fournit plus. Sidney Freedberg, clôturant sur Vertumne et Pomone sa monumentale histoire de la peinture de la Haute Renaissance comparait cet investissement de l'espace «négatif» et la contradiction qui s'y résout entre la planéité de la surface et le relief plastique des figures aux réalisations modernistes du Post-Impressionnisme'. Il n'est pas certain qu'à tenter une histoire croisée de la peinture et du dessin l'on ne puisse un jour déterminer ce que cette fresque doit à la pratique du des-ni ce que de telles études annoncent de l'émergence moderne du subjectile” (111).

16 August 2025

I chanced across a fragment of Steinberg's essay on Pontormo's Capponi chapel (because I'd scanned it on the same GRI visit as the Dossier Pontormo, mentioned above). Only as background, I paste the full text of what I reread this morning:

"Appendix. The foregoing argument posits a complex relationship between Pontormo's imagery and its visual sources. It is suggested that Pontormo rethinks a Michelangelo sculpture, or a Dürer woodcut, as an episodic event, imaginable in a later or earlier moment; that his figures of mother and son, in referring to Michelangelos marble group at St. Peter's, reenact the Pietà as a dissolving group. Such elastic quotations would not surprise us in the Baroque period. They are normal for Rubens, as when he makes the Three Graces (at the Dulwich Picture Gallery) break rank and scatter. But is such a prin-ciple of imitation compatible with the artistic thought of the 1520s? Are there parallel instances? / I believe that Raphael's approach to the "copying of Michelangelo offers a significant precedent. As Raphael recasts a borrowed figure from a different angle, so on another occasion, he rethinks a given pose from different point in time. The best-known example of his shifting vantage in space is the reference to the Doni Tondo Madonna in the Borghese Entombment of 1507: Michelangelo's hard-edged design is reimagined as though it had real existence in space. / In another instance, where the Michelangelo model is itself three-dimensional, the figure is deployed as though developed in time, that is to say, from the viewpoint of a subsequent moment. I have in mind Raphael's thoughtful preoccupation with the image of the Christ Child in the Bruges Madonna (fig. 5.16). / The Bruges Madonna is a tragic conception; not only because the Virgin's foreboding is heavier than what such adolescent beauty should bear, but because the chosen moment, though it unfolds in a solid block, represents an ominous parting. Issuing from between her maternal limbs, the child is about to go forth, to set foot on earth. The Virgin's right hand closes the book which contains the plan of the Passion. As if by accident, the child's left arm is hung over the mother's thigh, as in a Pietà 34 And the unbelievably complex interlace of the other hands— his right and her left-conveys conflict and shared reluctance; whether to go or stay, to release or restrain. The ambivalence is sustained in the child's motion, the twist of the shoulders that belies the course set by his head and feet. / Raphael knew this group and, while he rejected the precocious gravity of the mother, he adopted the child. The Bruges child appears closely copied in a Vatican drawing (fig. 5.17) and thereafter, progressively modi-fied, in several other studies for La Belle Jardinière (fig. 5.18)."

Partly afterward and partly in the meantime, I was thinking to myself, what a blindness my own longstanding distaste for Rafaello must account for in me, thinking first of a recent site of tension of this distaste (when in our apartment Zac pointed to the sweetness of this painter's women as the highest, to his eyes, that Painting has attained), and wondering how long ago it set in; it had to be sometime after a specific time I remember, it was 2014, when in Fr. Gregory's class I looked with great love and admiration of his putative self-portrait, looked on that face as upon perfection itself; this specific time must, itself, have been after The School of Athens had acquired a certain and overwhelming air of wonder for me, which was, by then, I can guess, already serving as the header of my father's blog, "Fides Ratio"; and then it was in 2017 that I stood in that stanza, that of the segnatura, and felt a greater magnetism in there than in the capella sistina; but all this was long before I had become devoted to painting, which I can date to the winter of late 2020 and definitively to the late summer of 2021, and then there was the

looking of at that point unprecedented intensity which I undertook in Prof. Lugli's class in the following months, and certainly by then I had given up trying to save Rafaello's standing in my mind, which was then falling ever lower, though even now I still cannot say exactly why.

And, partly afterward and partly in the meantime w/r/t the above "system" immediately above which itself comprises a "partly afterward and partly in the meantime," I moved through several thought-motions which amounted to a beginning of a painting. First, I copied the two trees and the contours of the into-blue gradation to the left of the figures in the Belle jardinière. (I say "first," but, really, even before I made this copy, I had in my mind the idea of an interlace whose striated interface--or "weft"--I already knew to be the contours of the into-blue gradation, and the possibility of striking a tensed balance with the two trees considered as compositional elements, focal entities, even verticals of an armature of mine. Even more: I was already thinking about the way in which this Raffaello strikes a relation (an asymmetrical one, almost vertical, in terms of chronology or transmission or (better) tra-dition) to the Saint Anne of Leonardo which hangs in its immediate company it in the Louvre--and I effectively just learned this, because I all but ignored the specificity of the Raffaello there, having a distinct antisensibility toward him at that time, too, registering in propositionally-accessible long-term memory really only the fact that "there was" "a Raphael" there in that place along that wall which contained both Leonardo's and Pontormo's Saint Annes.)

By now, and because of another "separate" memory-corpus of much greater recency, I was thinking of the Leonardo-system Saint Anne(s)--by now, the other arm of a balanced arc into the depths of the tradition of landscape, like a pacemaker contact into the heart of la Peinture (I felt, three days ago, the plate in the neck of William the dog as Maddie explained its physical arrangement to me)--as just that, a system, original and copy, but none so simple a binary, the Salai in the Getty which had just been--three days ago--the subject of a "separate" "idea"--namely, as I let myself live among its distances and botanies (worlds of fascination, intimate fascination, world-therein-fascination, not actually distinguishable, "botany" and "distance" only marginally or semi-continuously distinguishing a conceptual figure-world from a conceptual ground-world--this, I believe, is true to the heart of Leonardo and the words that would have passed between him and Salai), that the croppings of deep earth-green among the crystal mounts in the distance could each, in their myriad, in their implied (and palpably, vertiginously so!) infinity, each be host to clearings such as the one in which we and the Incarnation and its bodily support find ourselves, here in the foreground. Leonardo and Salai: A binary system, as of stars, and likewise never symmetrical, always in tensile balance, almost perfectly vertical (as reckoned by the tra-ditio between them), almost perfectly horizontal (as reckoned by the love between them).

To render the progression of thoughts coarser and more schematic, and on that new register to pick up into the means of synthesis of these vertiginously asymmetrical but nonetheless tensile-balanced binaries (at least one "arm" of which is always splitting into another binary of like character), first I drew Rafaello's two trees and the contours of his into-blue, the progressively receding integumenta of landscape dissolving upward and outward into atmosphere; then, I extracted the deeply asymmetrical balancing-armature from the Bonnard which since the Kimbell exhibition has been pinned to the wall above my bed, the one about which I believe I made a note about a week ago ("extracted" is an almost comical word for this operation; but what I can say about it is that it involved a left-right flipping, and the very difficult selection of an aluminum panel almost identical in dimension to the Bonnard, one onto which I'd poured

unpigmented gesso (“matte medium”), as thick as possible but as smooth as possible). Now I have the places where the balancing distant-trees--those growing out of distant green-rafts, the scatterings which might contain clearings of akin character to that in the foreground, those trees which, in other words, establish a correspondence between extreme proximity and this extreme distance--must land on the panel. And from this, I already have determined how the Leonardo-Salai into-blue contours must lie, in a certain corner at least, on the panel; their impossible synthesis or integration, which is to say, the lack thereof, with respect to the “analogous” “components” of the Belle jardinière, has somewhat more of a degree of “play” but will doubtless never appear as a “continuity.” Almost as an afterward, but certainly as an inevitability, the Bonnard afforded orbs which were evidently necessary shorings-up of a remaining dimension of intolerable imbalance between the two armatures to which that (Bonnard’s) compositional principle had by now given rise. These orbs can locate--that which I was holding out for--the sites of the “botanies” of the Salai-Leonardo system, which are, themselves, in their intermixture, to be a site par excellence in which to perform the inextricabilification of the Salai-Leonardo system itself: To whom between them can a given plant-form be attributed, after the filtration of my own hand, and all the opacity, confusion, fallenness, and somehow, therein, light, which it is unceasingly prayed, besought, to introduce?

All of this felt unbearably slow, but probably took about eight minutes to happen, and has taken more than half an hour to type. In principle, as though conforming to a logic of induction (but at unbridgeable odds with the mechanicity of induction’s mechanism), I will feel less and less compelled to narrate in this way things which have already happened in painting. In this narration, which is not so much writing as it is transcription, I have already recuperated the valorization of indolence of which I seek lately nothing so much as the shaking off; and in the foregoing it must be clear how close I was to making the first step out of its sway.

This is the image of the Jardinière from which I copied:

I am shameless in my self-exposure, that which sets me a world apart even from Matisse, who could not bear the nakedness he felt in watching on film the motions his pen traced in the air above his surface just before finally making contact with it:

Three days ago, I took these pictures:

This is the Bonnard in question, flipped:

And here is how I tried to transpose its deeply asymmetrical balance onto my panel (it is still important to me, though, on the principle of this, I sometimes still flicker, that I do not "square up," by those means or others, i.e. that I do not use a projector):

Here is what I paint first:

Today I begin translating "Au soleil du plafond."

30 August 2025

Delusional to claim, but not to aspire, to paint in the authentic synthesis of Matisse and Mondrian. Mondrian accounting for the armature: the stability or iterativity of the problem, the combinatorial or Mallarméan mode of working through solutions. Matisse accounting for the enormous leap beyond the confines of Mondrian's demesne: That my ingredients include curves and all their aspects (those aspects that Klee and Kelly drew out, articulated and enumerated and

distilled, with paragonal clarity), seen first in the fact that the armature itself contains ellipses, and affirmed each time I strive to incorporate into the armature any foreign body I desire: a Pontormoesque figure, a Cézanne-autograph-sign, the ovoid zones of a Matisse still life, or even the landscape and atmospheric contours of the background of a Raphael. Mondrian's ideals--what Polykleitos would have called symmetria, what I call tensed balance--have the first and last word, almost like an uncaused cause; but if there is any cause to this ideal itself, it can be ascribed to Matisse: That art's purpose is beauty. (Mondrian's symmetria is painting's means to this end.)

I don't feel I've discharged myself of what I set about to say. I'll try again:

Mondrian and Matisse. Just about everything I need recourse to, I can get that recourse through one or both of them. (Cézanne, for example.)

The Hantaïesque gimmick of restretching and using the edges, if it persists, is just my tool for getting into the intersection of these two beams of light. (I have to segment the continuum of the painting process into steps, because I do not believe in such mastery as would wholly transcend sequential operation; I have to justify the specificity of my armature; etc., and the gimmick accomplishes these few things.)

It felt good to think these things once I'd moved these two paintings next to each other.

Thus far I've insisted that in every armature the verticals be straightedged, the ellipses be handdrawn. At first this was arbitrary, axiomatic, but since then I've started thinking of it as supported by Matisse's advocation of the plumb line to his students. But I wonder whether the other three combinations--freehand verticals and compassed ellipses, straightedged verticals and compassed ellipses, freehand verticals and freehand ellipses--might not have their places too. For now, at least, especially as shown in the red Matisse still life one and the Raphael landscape one, I am still attached to the thrownness (what Mondrian would call "tragic") which the freehanding of the ellipses incorporates--the imperfection, which, in practice (seen on the wall), affords a sort of life or charge to the composition, as its imbalance calls out to the rectitude of the verticals to hold it in check.

Gagged by circumstance (in addition to, on top of, my ambient impotence). I haven't been able to lift a finger to render more articulate the things I've tried to make notes of by the insufficient means of screenshots of digital pages.

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31 August 2025

Yes I'm Pessoa too, or better (worse) the narrator of his Tabacaria. Look at any two or three of my million notes at random, then look at any one of my paintings (this next step might not even be necessary), and you will see that I am he.

I begin, often, to panic. Talentless and without determination (I asked Bella whether it were closer to the truth that I have gifts but not willpower, or vice versa; she naturally refused to answer, but I fear I have the worst of both ways). Yesterday I cried in the morning, the evening before I cried too, tears of exhaustion and pain. Because my back was tensed in a band of searing pain, between the shoulder blades, where it often is, since I was sixteen, at least. And how could it not, after two weeks straight spent working in a ninety degree open room that collapses the body into lethargy, in which I have nonetheless to contort my limbs into unnatural angles and screw my eyes up close behind goggles and masks and cans, two weeks whose only break involved two flights compressed in a middle seat in the back of a plane too noisy to console myself with a recording of a book and too dark to use a real one. But I cried not just for pain. Who knows whether worse than that is the postponement, the almost uninterrupted postponement, of the pathetic work which shows no sign of drawing closer to a state where it can redeem everything, every walk of my ongoing activity in this world. And on this I have staked everything.

In these months, I often experience the exhaustion of work so deeply that, not even subconsciously, I elevate indolence to an almost religious principle, rival, even to aretē, so that I speak its name aloud, even in the moments, rare, when I am so blessed as to be permitted to cling

even to a mere glimpse of it. I elevate indolence, as a principle, to this ideal status by means of Baudelaire, Homer, Moravia, Tati, Strau, Matisse--whoever is in reach. Some weeks, I go to mass not just for the Eucharist, but to cry out with an hour of silence, in pain that is more than just my own.
During the Elevation, token of all Catholicism for Mallarmé in his homage to Gautier ("Ne crois pas qu'au magique espoir du corridor / J'offre ma coupe vide où souffre un monstre d'or!"; Marchal calls this a "negative Elevation") and for Proust in his hanging of his memory of his aunt Léonie around it like a coat with a fabric-borne memory of its peg ("Just fancy, Françoise, Mme. Goupil went by more than a quarter of an hour late to fetch her sister: if she loses any more time on the way I should not be at all surprised if she got in after the Elevation. … "'There, now,' went on my aunt, beating her brow, 'that reminds me that I never heard if she got to church this morning before the Elevation. I must remember to ask Eulalie…' … "Has Eulalie gone yet? Would you believe it; I forgot to ask her whether Mme. Goupil arrived in church before the Elevation. Run after her, quick!"), I bow deep, I pronounce "My Lord and my God" aloud, the words of Thomas, the Twin, my namesake, my twin, incarnate (more than personified) witness of the splitting, the mask-trading, the twinning at the core of all identity, which I feel keenly; witness in his doubt to the flicker between proof and faith, the flicker between belief and unbelief, the flicker between truth and falsehood, at the core of every proposition, and the flicker of its every aspect in each of these shadow-propositions cannot but be alive still in the great one, recuperated in the eternal mode; Thomas the obscure (truest book I ever read, true to experience and its impossibility, true to me and my impossibility), Thomas the guilty and forgiven, coupable, his culpa felt deeply in my deep bow because it is always mine, in my every shortcoming, I work towards its purgation in my every expiatory suffering, from the most immediate pain to the most glancingly vicarious.

In the last note I mentioned Jacques Tati. It was Jean Ma, in the first week of her course on film sound, that first brought him to me; last month Krebber brought him back (he features heavily in Alien Hybrid Creatures), and last week Yve-Alain Bois (in an interview for November) did again, and Playtime made my heart come up into my throat.

The strains pull deeper: Jean Ma has written about indolence in her own way, a book called At the Edges of Sleep, with her "array of interlocutors—from Freud to Proust, George Méliès to Tsai Ming-liang, Weegee to Warhol."

I affirm that my worksite at the intersection of the multifarious chord-beams of light of Mondrian and Matisse has recourse to many lessons from the Puteaux group with its Section d'Or (aside from where I keep trying to look, in Duchamp's Young man and girl in Spring: the anatomy-rendering there is not fertile, but what makes that painting truly alive is fertile and always will

be), recourse too to many lessons from Desmos, which can be for me what the unnamed technological tool was to Valerie Keane (“Val,” John called her, when he laughed about the Catholic aspect the press writer imputed to her work, upon my asking).

This past Thursday I listened to The Iconoclast, Bois’s longest treatment of Mondrian, and these are the things I lifted a finger (barely) toward noting; mostly, though, I was just suffocated in trying to muster the totality of the momentum of what I’d just listened to, and détourne it into a breakthrough at my own wall. (No breakthrough, only piddling treading of water.)

“We do not really know what leads Mondrian to the exclusive use not only of pure but of primary color in a number of canvases as early as 1908-1909. At the time, as we shall see, he is clearly interested in divisionism for the way in which it emphasizes the autonomy of color as such, but he pays not the slightest attention to divisionism's central notion of complementary colors, nor to that of color contrast - which is all the more surprising when one thinks of the numerous pages he later devoted to the real value of oppositions." Though he read Humbert de Superville's Essai sur les signes incondi-tionnels dans l'art, which develops a veritable symbolism of color, the only time he mentions the book is as grist for his mill when discussing the emotionally neutral - thus "unconditional" - character of the vertical/horizontal opposition.? Mondrian's sudden interest in primary color may have come from Goethe by way of theosophy. Mondrian attended several lectures given by Rudolf Steiner in Amsterdam in March 1908. We

may assume that in one of the lectures, entitled "Theosophy, Goethe, and Hegel," Steiner alluded to the great German poet's Zur Farbenlehre, of which he was the authoritative editor. Two key ideas in Goethe's theory may have struck Mondrian at the time: first, all colors can be derived from the triad blue/yellow/red; second, and more essential (an idea harking back to Aristotle), the entire world of color stems from the fundamental opposition between light and dark, of which it is the varied declension.?'

Whatever its origin, Mondrian's fascination with pure primary color ends abruptly in the late summer of 1911, then resurfaces, first in his theory in 1917, then in his painting in 1920 (after, that is, the "checkerboards"). In the meantime, he has gone through a cubist phase during which his palette has been drastically reduced to ochers and grays, then through a gradual reemergence of primary (but not yet pure) colors.

It is in the third installment (January 1918) of Mondrian's first essay, "De Nieuwe Beelding in de Schilderkunst," that Mondrian returns to the topic of color. Here the debt to Goethe is explicit: "The material, the corporeal (through its surfaces) causes us to see colorless sunlight as natural color." (At this point, Mondrian refers to the poet in a note, quoting his definition of color as "troubled light."*) However, Mondrian immediately inflects Goethe's proposition in terms of interiority and exteriority: "Color then arises from light as well as from the surface, the material. Thus natural color is inwardness (light) in its most outward manifestation." This leads to his subsequently unshakable thesis that primary colors are the most "inward": "Reducing natural color to primary color changes the most outward manifestation of color back to the most inward."3 No such idea is found in Goethe; yet three cardinal propositions in "De Nieuwe Beelding" come directly from the poet, and they make it possible for us to situate the two "checkerboards" more precisely in Mondrian's evolution.

First: different colors appear to be situated at different distances on the picture plane: "depth Is manifested through the different colors of the planes"* (Goethe held that blue moves away while yellow moves forward). Mondrian toyed with such an optical illusion in his works of 1917 and early 1918, where the white ground is an empty space whose relative depth is marked by the punctuation of color planes that seem suspended in space (notably his Compositie in kleur A, Compositie in kleur B [Ott.
298; cat. 73] and the first three Composition with Color Planes of 1917 [Ott. 302; cats. 74, 75]). Such an effect is precisely what he will seek to eradicate in the modular grids that he paints a few months after the publication of this text.

Second: primary colors can be mixed with white without altering their initial characters (color gradation). After stating that "abstract-real painting must rely upon three primary colors, supplemented by white, black, and gray." Mondrian says: "Gray, too, because just as yellow, blue, and red can be mixed with white and remain basic color, so can black." 35

Third: light is indivisible and undifferentiated, and its relative darkening gives rise to color, which is "at all times specific, characteristic, significant."28 It was in order to establish this ontological divorce between light and color that Goethe had established his famous polarity table of yellow (hot) and blue (cold).?' More light gives you yellow; less gives you blue.

The last two propositions apply both to the works of 1917-1918 and to the "checker-boards." The third connects directly with Mondrian's habit of working in pairs of light and dark pictures, as if to test the separate workings of light and color. This practice prevails in his paintings from 1917 to the "checkerboards."? As such, these represent the last time that he was to be preoccupied with the representation of light in his work, for neo-plasticism emerges with a new concept, that of

"non-color."29
As outlined for the first time in 1921 in a text on music, Mondrian's concept of "non-color" allows him to eliminate from his painting the opposition of color and light (re-placing it with the opposition of color and non-color). In fact, this new concept allows Mondrian, without ever completely abandoning Goethe, to eliminate from his painting not just the notion of light but also one of its corollary, space as an empty and undifferentiated void. Thanks to non-color, Mondrian believes, the ground of the picture no longer has to be conceived (or perceived) as vague and atmospheric: it is no longer empty space, but, rather, "determined" space"°" (319 - 320).

“Typology
I shall now move on to a brief examination of the compositional types of these years.
Mondrian's starting point is a type that I propose to call "open," as it contains a large colored plane bounded on one side by the limit of the painting. It is found in five surviving works (among them Tableau / from the Museum Ludwig in Cologne [cat. 90]:
Composition with Red Plane, Black, Blue, Yellow, and Gray, Rothschild collection [cat. 9t]; and the painting with a large blue plane in the Dallas Museum of Art [cat. 92]) 22 It seems to begin preoccupying him in June 1920, the probable date of a rare preparatory drawing, almost a cartoon (cat. 167), for Tableau 1.123 If Tableau / is indeed the prototype (even if not completed until later on, as I am inclined to believe). it is surprising that the point of departure should be such a vertical composition - that is, in Mondrian's terms, so ineluctably "tragic," since it emphasizes only one of the fundamental directions. But this does provide us with a precious indication of what he is trying to accomplish: he wants to control the way in which the large color plane - occupying a considerable portion of the painting's surface - "leaps forward." He therefore opens it up, providing a lateral safety valve for its excess energy; in turn, the verticality of the picture's format balances out this potential horizontality.
Mondrian may have judged this type of composition difficult to adapt to a less elongated format; whatever the case, he fairly quickly abandons the lateral decentering of the large color rectangle: in this micro-series of five pictures, and taking the canvas from the Rothschild collection as the last of the series, the internal vertical edge moves gradually closer to the axis of symmetry.
Mondrian attempts a radical transformation of this compositional schema in Composition with Blue, Red, Yellow, and Black of 1922 (cat. 100), also decidedly elongated, where the large, open, decentered rectangle becomes a non-color plane,'" But he will not capitalize on this new pictorial invention until 1925-1927, when it will become his favorite compositional schema and the source of his most spare and successful canvases of the period (for example, Composition with Black, Red, and Gray of 1927 [cat. 113]).
Rather than continuing in this direction, he picks up another idea from the Rothschild painting (that of a bisecting vertical axis) to invent his central type, where the intersection at the center of the canvas clearly serves as a pivot for the entire com-position, which revolves in a spiraling movement.
In the first picture of this type, Tableau 3 with Orange Red, Yellow, Black, Blue, and Gray (Basel Kunstmuseum [fig. 13]), the vertical axis is still symmetrical and the canvas somewhat unresolved. Symmetry is then discarded in two ways - by displace-ment, and by duplication of the central axis. In the 1922 Composition with Red, Black, Yellow, Blue, and Gray (cat. 107), perhaps the last painting in this series, the central axis is set off to one side, close to the border of

the painting: this accentuates the picture's gyration, and, with its close kinship with the Cologne Tableau I, lets us see how various types relate to one another in Mondrian's oeuvre.
In the two major canvases of this central type, both of 1921 (Tableau /, Haags Gemeentemuseum [cat. 96], and Tableau II, on loan to the Kunsthaus Zürich [cat. 97]).
Mondrian retains a vertical axis, but doubles it to lessen its preeminence: it then ceases to be a pivot and serves, on the contrary, as a stabilizer underpinning the exceptional scope of the composition. This stabilization makes all kinds of audacity possible; in the Gementemuseum canvas, Mondrian manages to blind us to the fact that the red "plane" is actually almost as thin as the line bordering it. Even though it is one, we do not perceive this red plane as a line: such a confusion of genres, which remains latent if not veiled here, is not openly espoused until after 1932:
The third type (the one that Hoek calls peripheral) pushes this kind of visual negation to the limit. The culmination of all the 1921 work, it is pursued into 1922 and marks the advent of neo-plastic seriality.
This type involves two subgroups. The prototype of the first is the Gementemuseum's Composition with Red, Blue, Black, Yellow, and Gray (cat. 94), which is followed by a variant (Rothschild collection [Ott. 338]). and by two works that present the "same" composition, but upside down (cat. 98 [private collection], and cat. 99 [Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York])" (345 - 346).

"... Yet it is a third type that sees the most fruitful development in Mondrian's oeuvre He begins with the 1929 Guggenheim Museum painting (cat. 118), slightly displacing the intersection of the two bisecting axes toward the center: the result is a larger red rectangle in the upper right corner (Composition No. Il, 1929 [cat. 121]), and a return to the combination of the three types (open, central, and peripheral), which he has explored earlier in the 1922 painting in The Menil Collection (cat. 106), *7 Next, he tightens up the inscribed rectangle, moving it toward the center and making it almost square: thus he finishes with the magisterial type that marks the conclusion of his classic neo-plas-tic style. // Poussin? / Mondrian is particularly proud of this new type. He uses it from 1929 to 1932 in no less than eight paintings,' and again as a springboard for his introduction of the "double line" in 1932 - an introduction that signals the beginning of an accelerated development in which the pictorial certainties accumulated since 1920 are all dismantled one by one.
A document exists that helps us to assess the place of this series, which I shall henceforth call "classical," in Mondrian's oeuvre - a group of explanatory sketches almost shocking in their simplicity and bordering on the trivial (fig. 14). According to Herbert Henkels, this sheet of sketches is part of a letter sent in January 1931 to Albert van den Briel, a friend from his youth of whom Mondrian was very fond, but whose artistic sophistication was rudimentary. / The first work he considers dates from 1928, at that time one of the largest neo-plastic paintings (fig. 15; sketch, top left) 15º Contrary to his practice in all the vertical canvases from 1927, and for the first time since 1922-1923, Mondrian returns momentarily to the closed colored rectangle (in other words, a rectangle delimited by a black line on all four sides). The composition is divided edge to edge into six unequal areas by a vertical axis and by two horizontal lines delimiting a vast central register. The color planes are arranged in an arc on either side of the vertical axis, forming a cascade whose descent is counterbalanced by color: underneath and to the right of the

open red rectangle in the upper left corner is an opposing, closed vertical plane of blue, whose darker and less saturated hue is heightened by a small closed yellow plane below and to the left. 15t

With a radical change in strategy, Mondrian tackles this same type again in Composition No. 1 of 1931 (fig. 16, cat. 130; sketch, bottom left), which anticipates many characteristics of the works from the late 1930s. There is now only one color plane and an additional horizontal line on the left. Bringing dynamism to the composition are the extreme variations in the thickness of the lines (two horizontal bars are twice as thick as the verticals); these variations in thickness, which are more pronounced than ever before, create an effect of superimposition reminiscent of his first two diamond paint-ings. He clearly resorts to it here to negate the quasi-symmetry of the central axis, a quasi-symmetry designed to eliminate more effectively the zigzagging cascade effect of the first composition. Combined with the effect of adding the extra horizontal to the left, the quasi-symmetry combats the dynamism of the cascade, just as the dynamism of the superimposition combats the quasi-symmetry. Nothing in this tense equilibrium seems to contradict Mondrian's dialectical conception of the pictorial work - nothing, that is, except for the fact that Mondrian has yet to include in his neo-plastic syntax the idea of dynamism: he therefore criticizes this composition in the sketches he sends van den Briel [Bois continues in pursuing questions of the dimensions of equilibrium in these works for quite a bit longer yet]" (353 - 355).

To be able to truly call myself a student of Mondrian who has learned the learnable lessons is far off from me. Months or maybe years of diligent study. And yet I could be up for it.